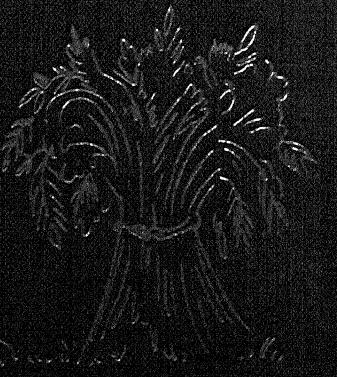
HARVEST OF THE LOWLANDS



839.3 G83h (2)

Kansas City
Public Library

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

This Volume is for

REFERENCE USE ONLY

KANSAS CITY, MO PUBLIC LIBRARY
0 0001 4553595 1

HARVEST *of the* LOWLANDS

HARVEST *of the* LOWLANDS

AN ANTHOLOGY IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CREATIVE WRITING IN THE DUTCH LANGUAGE WITH A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE LITERARY DEVELOPMENT, COMPILED AND EDITED BY J. GRESHOFF



1945

QUERIDO · NEW YORK

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH ALL GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF PAPER, METAL, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL MATERIALS.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AMERICAN BOOK—STRATFORD PRESS, INC., NEW YORK

PREFACE

THE COMPILING OF AN ANTHOLOGY SUCH AS THIS INVOLVES NUMEROUS difficulties. The first requirement was to give an adequate and accurate survey of the development of Dutch prose since 1880; at the same time many limitations had to be observed. The compiler has endeavored, wherever possible, to include complete stories and essays; fragments of longer works will be found the exception and have been used only when short prose pieces by a particular author could not be provided. In addition, the compiler had to bear in mind that the anthology would be presented to a public which is unfamiliar with the literary environment of the Netherlands. For this reason many pieces which mean a great deal to Dutch readers are lacking in significance for American ones and indeed might well be completely unintelligible. Finally, it must be pointed out that when this selection was made the Netherlands was still cut off from us; hence, certain material which the compiler would gladly have included was unobtainable, for only a relatively small portion of Dutch literature in the original is available in the United States.

The compiler has therefore assembled the best that was within his reach and that he considered appropriate for publication abroad. Because of limitations of space—and the volume has nevertheless grown larger than was first planned—a number of authors who rightly belong in such an anthology have perforce been omitted. Consequently, those writers whose principal work exists in English translation—for instance, the main work of Frederik van Eeden, Felix Timmermans, and some others—have been left out. In other instances, the compiler chose an outstanding author to represent a group; thus Top Naeff was selected as the representative of female writers like Carrie van Bruggen, Ina Boudier Bakker, etc., who between 1900 and 1930 made valuable contributions to the Dutch novel. Special attention has been paid to recent authors, that is, to contemporary literature and to contemporary writing which indicates possibilities for the future.

The volume concludes with four examples to illustrate the spread of Dutch thought throughout the world. In this section, Cola Debrodt represents Curaçao; Albert Helman, Surinam; Bep

Vuyk, the Dutch East Indies; and J. Van Melle, South Africa.

It would have been impossible to accomplish in any proper degree what the compiler set out to do without the assistance of Jan-Albert Goris, whose extensive knowledge of Dutch literature, infallible taste and untiring enthusiasm played an important part in the making of this anthology. The novelist Adriaan van der Veen also rendered valuable service, mainly by his critical comment and suggestion with regard to the volume as a whole and to the introduction in particular.

CONTENTS

Preface v
Introduction by Jan Greshoff 1

PART I: *THE RENAISSANCE OF 1880*

Jacobus van Looy: *The Death of My Cat* 51
Albert Verwey: *Leonard and Julian* 70
Frans Erens: *Berbke* 82
Louis Couperus: *Old Trofime* 92
Frans Coenen: *Impersonal Memories* 102
Herman Heijermans: *Candy* 107
Herman Heijermans: *Gran'ma* 113
Lodewijk van Deyssel: *A New Literature* 118

PART II: *REVIVAL IN FLANDERS*

Cyriel Buysse: *Peetje the Prussian* 127
Herman Teirlinck: *Little Cousin* 134
Stijn Streuvels: *The End* 147
F. V. Toussaint van Boelaere: *Late Idyll* 161

PART III: *THE FULFILLMENT*

Arthur van Schendel: *Angiolino and Springtime* 173
R. N. Roland Holst: *Dog and Man* 184
Aart van der Leeuw: *Miniatures* 188

INTRODUCTION

NETHERLANDS LITERATURE BEGINS WITH A NAME WHICH REPRESENTS a legend: that of the blind singer Bernlef, who lived in the eighth century in Holwerd near Dokkum, the northern part of the northern province of Friesland. In the biography of the devout Servant of the Lord, Luidger, written by Altfridus, Bishop of Munster, he is offered as an example of a man "loved by his neighbors for his good nature and his ability to relate most poignantly in his harpsongs the stirring deeds of ancestors and the wars of the Kings." But Bernlef also knew higher values than those of feats of arms, for whenever he met Luidger he learned psalms and received heavenly enlightenment, which was imparted to him and remained with him until he died in peace, old and full of days.

No texts by Bernlef have been preserved. The earliest written expression that comes down to us dates from the ninth century, composed in Latin. Milo, a monk from the monastery of Elnon near Doornik (about 872), wrote a biography of Saint Amand in 1800 hexameter lines, and after him countless pious gentlemen went in for a sort of rhyming art devoid of all poetry which is only of value today as historical raw material.

The first poet in the Netherlands language whose works have been at least partly saved was Hendrik van Veldeke, a Limburger and thus a man from the south. In 1171 he wrote his Saint Servaes legend in verse. And from that moment we see flourishing a rich literature in the lands south of the Rhine and west of the Meuse. Rich in more than one respect: the number of lyric, epic, didactic and dramatic poems originating between 1300 and 1600 is large and complex, but even more striking is the endless variegation in feeling and form.

The discovery of the Middle Ages must be considered one of the highest achievements of Romanticism. For a very long, far too long, time, there was in the Netherlands also talk of the "dark Middle Ages," in a disapproving tone, as of a period in which ignorance, force and cruelty ruled. There was no interest in the architecture of those days, which was considered barbaric

because it departed from classical order and classical order was holy, the beginning and end of all conceptions of art. The art of painting in the Middle Ages was considered common, not exalted enough, without style, because in this respect too esteem for the classical and imitation classical was unlimited. As for medieval literature, there was refusal to acknowledge the art of poetry in such clumsy efforts, in such language-poor stammering. These prejudices made a thorough and impartial study of medieval intellectual life impossible. At present we view the Middle Ages as one of the happiest and most glorious periods in the intellectual life of the Netherlands.

Gothicism meant, in the Netherlands too, the discovery and glorification of the vertical line in contrast to classical architecture, which is based and executed entirely upon the horizontal. The rather sudden flourishing of Gothicism meant an irresistible breaking-through of lyric feeling, whereas before, reason, governing both chronicle and discourse, had been predominant. The history of intellectual life in the Netherlands or—to confine ourselves to the subject—the history of the literature of that country, reveals an uninterrupted contest between the two elements, feeling and reason, which—like fire and water—by their inherent contrast and latent potentialities rule human existence. When, as in the early Middle Ages, feeling, too long suppressed and ignored, was liberated suddenly with uncommon force, a beautiful period of flourishing resulted, in which poetry pervaded even the humblest expressions of life. However, in the course of years, very gradually and slowly, reason asserted itself again.

The period of the rhetoricians, that is, the period of deterioration which concluded the Middle Ages, noteworthy in many respects, can only be viewed as a victory of reason. Netherlands literature, which was from 1300 to 1400 remarkably spontaneous, rich, fresh, colorful and full of feeling, declines, after 1400, gently and calmly in the strange, ingenious fabrication of the rhetoricians. In such all too reasonable periods, life is lived in one design. There are no more secrets; only one force rules, that of ingenuity, which expresses itself in a formality that comes seriously near to poverty.

But when the people had again accumulated sufficient vitality for a new outburst, the result was—after the transition period which we call the Early Renaissance—the Renaissance, the rehabilitation of real, natural, free feeling. What was Gothicism around 1200 was Baroque around 1600. The forms of expression, both in architecture and in painting as in literature, were very

different, but in both cases we were dealing with a rehabilitation of the unlimited superiority of feeling and of inner life.

The intellectual period of prosperity in the Northern Netherlands during the seventeenth century, which we call the Golden Age, in turn tired itself out in the period of the so-called societies of poets: the eighteenth century is again a period of cautious intellectuality and therefore unsuitable for the production of great art.

Liberty came about through Romanticism, the third great outburst of feeling, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Romanticism has not yet been concluded.

Netherlands literature seen as a whole from 1250 to 1950—thus during seven centuries—has therefore known three enormous revolutions of feeling: the Gothic, the Baroque and the Romantic: the Middle Ages, the Golden Age (seventeenth century) and the New Period.

It goes without saying that these radical revolutions took place not only in Netherlands intellectual life: movements like these are always universal. It is merely that variations of form appear in the various nations.

In the Middle Ages there was as yet no talk of national characteristics. Intellectual life in Western, Central and Southern Europe formed a nearly complete uniformity, with Rome as its center. The Gothic is therefore a conception involving far less differentiation than the Baroque. And the Baroque in its turn is again less differentiated than the Romantic.

THE GOTHIC

In literature the European cohesion of Gothic life shows most strongly in the assimilation of the same themes into the various languages. The idea of plagiarism did not exist, and there was no talk of plagiarism in the strict, modern meaning of the word, that of deliberate literary theft. If we consider our Netherlands dramatic production in the Middle Ages, we discover that *all* subjects and personalities treated appear also in the French and English drama. Only the noble play entitled *Karel ende Elegast* is not known outside the Netherlands; but this does not mean that the play is a Netherlands one: the possibility that the original text has been lost cannot be altogether disregarded. Such a genuine, strictly Netherlands poem as *Reinaert* is adapted from the French *Le Plaid du Reinard.* And here we find two remark-

able symptoms, which attract the attention of anyone studying Netherlands literature in the Middle Ages. In the first place, notwithstanding the fact that the themes, and often the details of the subject-matter, have been adapted, the adapters managed to give their adaptations a tone of their own. A mutual alliance exists, which, however, does not exclude personal nuance. And in the second place, though it had only a limited amount of themes available, literature in the Middle Ages gives the impression of wealth and large variety, owing to the fact that authors in those days knew how to arrange and rearrange the available subjects with surprising cleverness. From a comparison of medieval texts in which, in various languages, the same or allied motifs have been assimilated, the influence of idiom upon literary expression is clearly demonstrated. The same play, written in French or in Netherlands, thereby acquires a totally different character. Not only the sound of the language but also the color of the language is involved. And so the clear, guileless, somewhat stammering Netherlands of the Middle Ages determines to an important extent the special poetic character of our medieval literature, including those cases where it was built upon adapted motifs.

Not so very long ago, at about the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, very shortly after the period of lack of appreciation, it became the custom to make the Middle Ages an example. It was called a great period of intellectual unity and for that reason was able to produce a monumental art with very pronounced character. Catholicism was the inner cohesion, and the feudal system, no matter what injustice was connected with it, had (it was believed) the advantage of creating a strong social structure. And in contrast was indicated our inner conflict, our lack of intellectual solidarity and as a consequence our crumbling society. The unity of religion created, according to this theory, an art of unequaled vitality and especially of an unparalleled grandeur of purpose and structure. Modern man, beset with conflicts, was, on account of these conflicts, incapable of such superhuman performance. And, to go one step further, against natural fellowship was placed our individualism; against the religion, our skepticism. And herewith the road was opened to a conception which reigned for several decades in certain Netherlands circles, that only a new communal sense and a new religion, bound mutually, could save art. Some made a religion out of socialism, others demonstrated that socialism and Christianity were in reality one, but all were looking for the unity lost since

the Middle Ages. They tried to conquer in their minds the Renaissance and Romanticism, which they could not undo, for they saw therein symptoms of decay. To these desires for a new social structure based on a new intellectual unity, there was no objection whatsoever. There was objection, however, to the fact that, as soon as reference to the Middle Ages was made, a completely incorrect idea of it was conceived, because little is known about social unity in the Middle Ages. Christianity was the universal religion, without doubt, but Catholicism in those days was not yet the uniform system that it is now, and in practice we see how numerous Roman Catholic forms were disguised or barely disguised expressions of paganism. Paganism in the Netherlands had a tenacious vitality, and it took Christianity centuries to conquer it completely.

Christianity introduced, apart from a number of new dogmas and customs, a completely new conception of existence, created a new relationship between life and death, laid the basis for a new social theory. We should not forget that Christianity meant a complete revolution, compared to which the later revolutions, the violent social and economic changes in England, France and Russia successively, are symptoms with limited meaning. Such a complete and thorough revolution does *not* achieve effect without striking a blow.

The Middle Ages, therefore, could never have been a period of sublime rest, of unity, of balance, because it was ruled by the tragedy of the fall of one form of life and the rise of another. This tragedy explains the impressive violence of expression in the Middle Ages and of the religious in particular. The new religion could only maintain itself through battle and fierce affirmation. Those who were moved by the urgent power of religion had to testify to it vociferously and with emphasis. Violence marks almost all poetry of this period.

We have, therefore, in the Middle Ages an intellectual life that forms no unity and hence is extremely agitated and dramatic. On a social level unity was unknown as well. In the first place, there had been from the earliest times a clear division into nobility, clergy and peasantry. These classes did not live in hierarchic harmony together; on the contrary, they were unceasingly involved in a mutual life-and-death struggle in which the peasants, and the later evolving bourgeois class, proved to be the element with the strongest vitality.

The separation of the classes was so complete that we can speak of three lives on three levels, which only rarely came into

contact. The nobility had a mythology completely of its own. Around the worship of woman was built a complicated and charming ritual; out of primitive pugnacity was created a magnificent game, the tournament, in which the initiated spectators enjoyed the colors and the rhythm and also the deftness of the participants and above all the subtle code of honor which was a part.

The clergy created, for their own use and for lay believers, a mythology in which Mary seems to have taken a higher place than her Divine Son, and in which, as we have seen before, numerous heathen after-effects were assimilated in more or less shrewd manner. The third social class had at its disposal two groups of motifs, and these we again find very clearly in literature: the glorification of daily life, earthly love, food and drink—in which a feeling for rough but real humor is never lacking—and satire on nobility and clergy, in which a passionate bitterness is usually expressed. This third social class for the first time brings the element of conscious criticism into literature. Criticism of the landowners, who obstructed the economic development of peasants and bourgeoisie, criticism of the clergy, which did not always succeed in bringing its actions to the level of its words, and also self-criticism in the attractive form of self-mockery.

The endlessly variegated literary richness of the Middle Ages extends over a period of almost three centuries. When the inner power gradually slackened, literature declined into the sometimes foolish, sometimes alarming, but always poetryless fabrications of the rhetoricians.

These rhetoricians usually were well-to-do townsmen, who, as a pastime, composed poems according to highly complicated schemes of verse. When we take offense at their complete lack of insight into the essence of poetry and personal talent, we should not forget that their sometimes clumsy, sometimes far too facile examples of poetry at least prove one thing, the high esteem in which literature was held in their day. The making of poems was considered the noblest and most sublime of occupations, and anyone who wished to show that he was not uncultured devoted himself to it with enthusiasm.

It took some time until Netherlands literature had torn itself free from the influence of the rhetoricians. Even in the great poets of the Golden Age traces are still to be found. The rescue came partly by way of popular poetry, which, though not always of pure quality, possessed the invaluable asset of reality, but chiefly through the influence of the tremendous renovations in

the intellectual structure of the Western world, an influence which was felt strongly and permanently in the Netherlands, because the Reformation became an inseparable and gradually predominant part of the movement of renewal.

The transition period, in which the medieval spirit produced strong after-effects and in which the new idea developed with even more force, created in the Netherlands numerous new figures but no one great literary work of art in the Netherlands language. When we speak of important figures, we are thinking of course, in the first place of the universal humanist, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467–1536), who, no matter how valuable as a thinker, not only from the point of view of the Netherlands but also from that of all of Western Europe, may be mentioned in a survey of the Netherlands literature only in an indirect connection, because he wrote in Latin. The same circumstance affects his older and less-known contemporaries, Wessel Gansvoort (1419–1489) and Roelof Huysman (1422–1485), both men of Groningen.

The period of the rhetoricians, which went to pieces as a result of its absurdity and emptiness, allowed scope, in the ensuing period, for the development of folk-songs, which were a natural reaction to the rhetoricians. They are, so far as the period of the Early Renaissance is concerned, very seldom of outstanding beauty, although some few but authentic masterpieces were produced. The bricklayer of Bruges, Anthonie de Roovere, who died in 1482, composed among others a famous dance of death, *Van der Mollenfeeste,* in which there are portions of rare power and originality.

The most important folk-songs (and the Beggars' songs[1] are to be considered as such in the first rank) originated towards the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The new popular art developed with cheerful enthusiasm and created the genuine masterpiece—the Wilhelmus—which, around 1572, was the battle- and comfort-song of the Dutch inside and outside the occupied Fatherland.

The text of the Wilhelmus is attributed to Philips Marnix of Saint Aldegonde (1539–1589). Marnix, who excelled as a poet if the Wilhelmus was actually composed by him, was one of the strangest figures of the early Reformation in the Netherlands. He put a flourishing finish to his studies with a course at Geneva, which he left in 1561, "Calvinist to the backbone."

[1] Beggars were the rebels against the Spanish tyrants.

Besides Marnix, Anna Bijns (1494–1575) should be mentioned. She stood for a passionate glorification of the Old Testament, grimly opposed to the not less passionate papist-hater, Marnix. In Bijns and Marnix the medieval accent is still strongest; in the nobleman, Jan van der Noot (1539–1595), and in Karel van Mander (1548–1606) the Renaissance-like Baroque spirit already dominates.

It does not seem necessary to list more authors of the so-called Early Renaissance in the Netherlands in a concise survey such as this. They were remarkable figures, but the works that they left us are unfortunately rarely, perhaps never, more remarkable. And it is this "more" with which literature is concerned.

There might be one other reason why the Early Renaissance did not produce any great writers. The Dutch had just begun their great battle against Spain. The arts, literature and science seldom achieve their highest flowering in times of disturbance and war. The production of art irrevocably demands time, time for reflection, time for slow, thoughtful preparation, time for deliberate work and as to the reader, time to assimilate the work quietly and time to meditate.

Apart from time, art requires the possibility of concentrating upon things beyond this world and upon matters out of the present. All periods of violent action are periods of intellectual poverty. The transitional period between the Middle Ages and the seventeenth century was therefore especially important for the things to come, but it was not the proper time for the "finished piece of work."

Just as ideas and judgment about the Middle Ages, in the course of the nineteenth century in the Netherlands, were subject to a complete revolution, so later historians changed their opinion about the old idea that between the Middle Ages and Renaissance there was a wide gap. In history generally, and in the history of culture most certainly, some rapid changes with alternate slackening or acceleration of rhythm are observed, but the symptom of rupture is unknown. Events always result from one another. If we sometimes do not perceive the connection, that is owing to our limited knowledge. When we sum up the symptoms of Humanism and Renaissance and Reformation and Baroque, we immediately discover that the conditions of their origin were present during the entire Middle Ages. To mention a single example: it is generally stated that the Renaissance

meant a revived interest in Greek and Roman antiquity. This is true in so far as that interest was extreme during the Renaissance, but the adjective "revived" is incorrect, because interest in classical antiquity was never dead. During the Middle Ages the old languages (Latin in particular) were taught and kept up with care; in the literature of the Middle Ages classical motifs are to be found; Aristotle was an object of serious study. I should therefore prefer to say that the Renaissance was characterized by a clearer understanding of ancient culture, by a more unbiased study and interpretation of the texts and by a passing beyond accepted limits; what had formerly been the privilege of monks was now brought within the reach of literate laymen. This latter symptom is so typical of the period of transition which we are reviewing that we must pay it special attention: *the breaking of shackles and the surpassing of limits!*

As the medieval class system had in the course of years lost its solidity and thereby much of its sway, during the Renaissance laymen of every rank could obtain admission to the sources of knowledge and science and later also to posts and offices.

In the period of transition we still see the three medieval social classes continue parallel to each other, but the separating walls are no longer completely closed and the accent has been shifted. The nobility no longer dominates, the clergy too has lost of its privileges and the third class has secured a dominant position in society. When a new group of the population rises, we always see the same symptom: a violent thirst for knowledge, because knowledge is power; a no less violent vitality, because the joys which were formerly inaccessible must be enjoyed by taking deep draughts; finally a need for personal liberty, which is likewise obvious, after the economic and social coercion under which the third class lived in the Middle Ages.

Thus we have the three strong passions which characterize the Renaissance: passion for knowledge, passion for life, passion for freedom.

The study of the classics as a basis for every sphere of culture was taken in hand, not only with zeal, but according to new systems, by men who had to face this material new and fresh. The bourgeoisie, who for the first time had money and possibilities for enjoyment, certainly did not pass up this opportunity. And where freedom was concerned, this was not only political freedom but above all intellectual freedom. Political freedom was not very great, according to our present ideas, but in comparison with the condition of slavery and servitude in which a large

majority of the people lived during the Middle Ages, this period was assuredly an enormous change for the better.

To be an artist in the Middle Ages did not really differ from being one in the Renaissance, because all that is art and that concerns its origin is not limited by time; but the artists of the Middle Ages were far less conscious of the value, purpose and meaning of art than the people of the Renaissance were. An intellectual pride originated which, in my opinion, is one of the most convincing symptoms and one of the greatest charms of the artist of the Renaissance.

Apart from all the above considerations it should never be forgotten that *all* intellectual currents were and are originated and carried on by man, and that man changes his ideas, preferences, morals, may improve his knowledge and deftness, but that in reality he remains unchanged, and that his existence is defined by his relation to life and to death. All human feelings and thoughts, without exception, are directly or indirectly connected with life or death, heavenly or earthly love, desire for power, richness, pleasure, joy, grief, each movement of intellect or mind being a movement connected with life or death. And this connection with the first and last things is revealed to us most clearly and convincingly in fear, fear of life or fear of death, which fills our entire life and which is our mightiest impulse to all creation.

This fear, in the Middle Ages very strong and directly present, expressed itself in the Renaissance indirectly, in a passion for life. Fear always has a double action: that which makes us fearful both attracts and repels. Death fascinates us and makes itself so desirable that we long for it, or it appears so terrible that we fly for refuge to all the pleasures which earthly life offers us in vain. And it is that irrevocable, fruitless spirit that gives each joy, and particularly the colorful sensual festivities, of the Renaissance the tragic accent.

The fear which in the Middle Ages welled forth unprejudiced, openly and forcefully, assumed in the Renaissance the form of a much more conscious and more concrete desire for eternity. While medieval man consoled himself with the church's promise of eternal life and eternal salvation, man of the Renaissance took certainty for uncertainty and looked for self-perpetuation in form as realized in a piece of art.

In medieval mysticism (and all medieval Netherlands lyricism is mystical) man tries to save himself by losing himself in God; in the Renaissance, he does so by making himself immortal by

means of a permanent outline, by means of the miracle of creating form. It goes without saying that from this new idea there also originated a completely new relation between the artist and his work and art generally, and, as a consequence, a new conception about the value of man. In the Middle Ages, mortal, physical man was only a painful obstacle to the spirit's achieving its highest destination; in the Renaissance the worldly man was the means of the superworldly spirit revealing himself. The man who had to be despised by all the faithful of the Middle Ages because he impeded the approach to God, this same man was revered in the Renaissance because he was part of the grand world entity in which God revealed Himself.

THE BAROQUE

Netherlands literature is in its highest and most remarkable expression a lyric literature. Many are astonished to learn that we Netherlanders, known, not entirely without justice, as sober, businesslike, exact and, let us be frank, pedestrian, that we, merchants and seafarers, possess a literature, in which the pure lyrical element strongly dominates. I see in this a natural and necessary reaction to the moralizing quality that characterizes both Netherlands individuals and the Netherlands community. The fervent relation between the traditional national character and accepted Calvinism has created a typical mentality, which we may call typically Netherlandish. And this mental condition still more or less characterizes those who are no longer directly connected with Calvinistic dogmas. I do not know how far this comparison goes, but the picture which Van Wyck Brooks has given of old New England shows here and there striking resemblances to Netherlands life and the Netherlands way of living. The Netherlands lyric is the often pent-up, violent reaction to Netherlands dignity and virtue, which have a tendency to stiffen into dogmatic forms, while a certain theological, Old Testament hair-splitting was not foreign to our ancestors and is still not so today.

Poets in such an old, solid, stiff society cannot be anything but rebels, grumblers, fervent opponents of law and order, because they announce a higher order, that of poetry.

We therefore combine a strong (often painful) urge to moralize with an irresistible need for lyric flight. Our lyric forms the exhaust valve for a life that is dominated by strong moral laws and an almost servile adaptation to traditional habits. Though me-

dieval life did not give much occasion for this, we may see the first indication of the phenomenon already at that time. But it could only acquire its full meaning for us after the victory of the Calvinistic idea, which for centuries has defined the spirit, even of those who believe they have put aside the religion of their fathers. The epic as synthesis of the lyric and didactic we find in the Middle Ages (Van den Vos Reynaerde), when Catholicism did not exclude a strong worldly passion, and we find it again in the twentieth century (in the form of the modern novel), when Protestantism has lost, together with its preponderance, much of its absolutism. In the early Renaissance, in the Golden (seventeenth) Century, and in the period of decay which followed, we find in Netherlands literature, ever close to each other, hostility and, inseparably joined, the irresistible urge towards learning and the enchantments of song.

Both these currents find expression in the work of every important author of those days, and we see these currents most clearly in Joost van den Vondel, who is, perhaps not the most subtle poet in the strict sense of the word, but undoubtedly the most impressive human and literary figure of our literature. Vondel, as a great figure is likely to be, is the complete summary of all the currents and undercurrents that determine the time in which he lived. We have seen how a period of unknown richness and variety, the Middle Ages, passed away into a poetry of the rhetoricians, which could at best be called intelligent and in which there is very little of lasting value. In Vondel we recognize traces of the pure medieval mystic, traces of the meaningless playfulness of the rhetoricians and traces of the new understanding of man and his value, which were put into circulation through Humanism. In addition, above all, Vondel is a man of his time and fervently connected with all expressions of it, but he is also as an individual so strong and powerful that he not only pierces the framework of his society but also the borders of his period and therefore cannot but remain for the Netherlands people even now a living reality. His art is so incomparable and moreover so indestructible that it has saved even his least important occasional verse from transitoriness. Yes, so strong is his personality, still present to us, that we are convinced that circumstances have not influenced Vondel, rather Vondel the circumstances, so that many events of his period take on for us a Vondelian character, while they occur in a Vondelian atmosphere. The Council pensioner, Oldenbarneveldt, is a character

with a clearly defined outline for historians, but we, non-historians, see him and recognize him as a contemporary through the verses in which Joost van den Vondel has pictured Oldenbarneveldt's fate for all time.

Vondel's dominating power forms one of the greatest curiosities of our literature. Because, though surrounded by men who were his superiors in many respects, he remained, in his time as in ours, the first one, the only one. Vondel lived long, from 1578 to 1679 (both Marnix van Saint Aldegonde and Jan Luyken were his contemporaries), but he remained himself throughout all changes in conception and taste, the master who stands in the midst of life and yet above it.

The secret of Vondel's irresistible personality and vitality is brought about by his profound mystical alliance with the people from whom he arose. This fact in almost every respect determines his being and also the contact between him and contemporaries like Hooft, Huygens and Cats.

A comparison between Vondel and Cats in this respect is extremely instructive. We should observe, to start with, that such a comparison can only be superficial, because, if we confine ourselves to the real, that is, poetical value of their works, Vondel is a genius and Cats an ordinary paltry rhymer. But Cats was a man of standing, rich, distinguished, a man who held high posts; yet he wrote books filled with didactic poems, filled with coarse, jocular familiarities, while Vondel, first stocking-merchant and, after his bankruptcy, clerk in a pawnbroker's shop, an unimportant citizen, wrote in an exalted tone, not only when he treated of exalted subjects, but also when he stayed close to the ground.

Cats always showed, in all his trivialities, the man of standing; Vondel, in all his sublimity, the man of the people. The secret of this symptom was the fact that Cats wrote *for* the people, while Vondel wrote *from* the people's hearts, that Cats consciously and benevolently "descended" to the masses of his simple countrymen, while Vondel, who belonged to the masses, worked himself "up" and "carried along the masses in his ascent."

Vondel did not possess the refinement and lyric tension of Hooft, but he possessed a number of qualities, which nevertheless made him rise above Hooft and Huygens, both great and important figures in Netherlands intellectual life. He possessed a holy ardor, an untiring passion, a vitality welling up from deep sources, a fervency, a frankness, a freedom of spirit and mind and, above all, the power to renew his vigor time and again.

He was about eighty when he wrote his greatest masterpiece, the most important work of Netherlands literature, the dramatic trilogy, *Lucifer, Adam in Exile* and *Noah*. Not only does this work show no trace of the author's age but, on the contrary, it abounds richly in lyric youth.

In the year 1641, Vondel became a convert to the Roman Catholic faith. This fact in itself, considered in the surroundings and the period—which was fanatical Protestant Holland relatively soon after the Reformation—was a deed of courage. For Vondel there existed only one law, inner conviction, and for that he braved all consequences and danger.

Joost van den Vondel was a respectable, a great, an upright man. For example, he was too honest to be able to be pleasant, and he therefore lived in the midst of the artists of his time as a solitary and he found companionship rather among simple citizens than among his brothers in art.

P. C. Hooft, the master of Muiden, had made his castle there an intellectual and fashionable center. Authors, painters and musicians met there to have serious discussions and to enjoy themselves. In this famous Muiden center, Vondel, the unchallenged master, was a guest only once. He felt completely out of place in the midst of this refinement of intellect, this style of living and the courtly people around. By contrast, Hooft felt uncomfortable in the presence of such a natural power, of such a real and ingenuous man as Vondel.

The real difference between the Baroque man and the Renaissance man is shown by the comparison of Vondel and Hooft (1581-1647). Hooft was a man of refinement, who composed a number of graceful, harmonious and yet emotion-arousing poems (in particular his sonnets), a learned man, an author of dignified and well-considered prose, a person of high standing, a man of the world, an epicurean and above all a pleasant man, obliging, polite and charming. Far less a poet than Hooft, but just as learned, Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687) was the type of the perfect Hollander of the Golden Age, righteous to the backbone, quiet and zealous, liking the good things on earth and blessed with a magnificent human humor.

Jacob Cats (1577–1660) was, we have seen, also a representative of the leading social class. His poetical work, which is far from being poetical, was for centuries the household book of the Netherlands citizen; his pedestrian morality, his coarse realism and his mostly scatological jocularity entitled him to this honor.

Much nearer to Vondel, and thus also nearer to the Middle Ages, was the man who, together with Vondel and Hooft, was the greatest poet of his time, Gerbrand Adriaanszoon Breeroo: like Vondel, a child of the people, a magnificent figure, real through and through, at one time crude, then fervently religious, rebellious, then humble. And consequently he was always driven by a supreme love, in turn for an earthly woman and for his Saviour. Breeroo, the first Bohemian in Dutch literature, is above all the poet of repentance. After he had lived out his unbridled youth with wine and women, he found his most moving poetical accents in self-reproach and in prayers to God for forgiveness.

What a richness there was in the Netherlands of the period! Time was ripe for it. The war for freedom against Spain, though not yet crowned with a peace treaty, had been won. The young republic day by day gained power and respect in the world. And, what is of particular importance, wealth flowed to Amsterdam from all directions and from all continents. After long years of struggle and difficult existence, at last the time had come, and attention to higher things of the mind developed.

Besides the eminent figures which I have named, besides Vondel, Breeroo, Hooft and Huygens, we see poets who, perhaps secondary in rank, have yet without exception enriched the Netherlands lyric with a number of masterpieces, poets who even at present are still read and lived with: Jacob Reefsen (1568–1658); Heiman Dullaert (1636–1684), a painter, Rembrandt's pupil; Johannes Stalpaert van der Wielen (1579–1630), and Jan Luyken (1649–1712) who concludes this great period with dignity. Luyken's profession was that of lithographer, and many hundreds of his works have been preserved. He started his poetical career with a volume of love songs, *Duytsche Lier,* which among many virtues especially possesses that of jauntiness, but which in its laboriousness appears somewhat poor. Later on the poet bought up all copies of this book and destroyed them: as far as we know, only three copies were saved. In 1924, for the first time, a reprint appeared in a very limited edition. Luyken's conversion from a gay, careless, superficial existence to a life of meditation and dedication most probably took place under the influence of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme. In his second period he was inspired to compose a series of the deepest and most beautiful religious poems ever written in the Netherlands language.

THE ROMANTIC

Before we discuss Netherlands Romanticism, we must first establish the fact that two clearly distinguishable meanings are attached to the word Romanticism. Romanticism is the name given to a rather exactly limited movement in the history of literature, which made itself known for the first time toward the end of the eighteenth century, and in the midst of which we still live today. Romanticism, according to an infinitely wider conception, is also the term applied to a form of thought and conduct which has appeared, and will appear, in all ages. We have therefore to deal with a historical definition for professional uses and with the appellation of a state of mind or human disposition. Everyone recognizes that there is a connection between these two applications of the same word, but this connection is not so close that we may identify them. The romantic person is characterized mainly by two qualities; consciously or unconsciously he places the soul above the intellect and thus builds his real life almost exclusively of emotional values. He believes passionately in imagination and inspiration. Consequently he considers the precepts of reason incomprehensible and even a hindrance to his clear and honest development. He recognizes that life can only be inwardly experienced and inwardly justified and thus finds the origin, criterion and purpose of all his thoughts and deeds in himself. He creates for himself a world outside and above reality. In the last instance he bows only before the superior power of his own imaginings.

The romantic life is an uninterrupted movement without absolute laws imposed from above for all time. It is dynamic and it creates, according to its own needs, a complete, changing ethic which, according to the example of the Sophists, quickly leads to the glorification of power and the theory that might is right. Romanticism is not restricted to the fine arts. Now more than ever there is talk of a romantic social doctrine which is founded on the irrational forces which stir the masses and thus exerts a strong influence on political economy. These political romanticists oppose reason and, still more, rationalism. We see them in clear contrast with the classic conceptions concerning society and social classification. The Netherlands philosopher Kohnstamm rightly says: "The conception of the world of Romanticism must be considered first of all as a reaction to the philosophy of the Enlightenment. It therefore places at its center not Reason but

Feeling; it therefore makes, not the separate parts, but the whole that is more primordial than its elements, its most important category. It places oneness above multiplicity, organism above mechanism."

For the Romanticism in present-day thought, new names have been sought. At first vitalism was used; after that, more generally, "philosophy of life." This was characterized by the preponderant significance which its adherents gave to the irrational in the world, in society and in the individual. Inspiration is glorified at the expense of the intellect. The two great romantic influences which have been felt in various spheres in the Netherlands are Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud. Ludwig Klages went so far as to represent the mind as the enemy of the soul, in which case mind has to be understood exclusively as *ratio* and the soul as the summing up of the unconscious. Romanticism is thus medieval mysticism, Shakespeare, Baroque, psychoanalysis, fascism, surrealism. . . . The entire Netherlands literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present is romantic; the *Camera Obscura* of Nicolaas Beets (the most-read, popular prose book of the Netherlands) is romantic, despite the fact that the romanticist Potgieter put it aside as an expression of the "copying lust of daily life," so rejectable in his opinion; the naturalism following the literary movement of 1880 is also romantic, although it mistakenly considered itself to be objective and thus anti-romantic.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century stands the first absolute and great romanticist, the remarkable figure of Willem Bilderdijk (1756–1831). In his day he was, as human being and as poet, the object of violent disputes and, up to now, posterity has not determined its attitude toward him. Until recently passionate debates were conducted about Bilderdijk as a poet and about his character. He has had defenders through thick and thin and critics who consider no line of his of any worth. From the fact alone that he has been a controversial figure for a century it is to be seen that he possessed special qualities and special faults and was no indifferent, banal figure.

His lyric poetry, according to my personal taste, is careless in construction, over-rich in false, turgid feeling and impotent bragging, but with here and there, suddenly, some flights of true genius. His personality in the world of daily life was not very attractive: Bilderdijk was an example of a cantankerous psychopath who elevated falsehoods to rules of life. Grandson of an

innkeeper, he drew up a forged family tree for himself, according to which he was descended from the Counts of Teisterbant and thus from the Knights of the Swan. But what is most difficult to forgive Bilderdijk is the weakness that he showed in public life. He left the country as an adherent of the House of Orange when the French marched in, but as soon as he saw advantage to himself, he returned to Holland, became a "collaborationist," at first degraded himself to accepting a job from the "King," Louis Bonaparte, and finally went so far as to glorify Napoleon in a bragging ode.

There is an utterance of Bilderdijk's in a letter to Tydeman, which is very significant, particularly now:

> I immediately looked upon him [Napoleon] as the man called to establish a new general monarchy. Yes, I looked forward to his coming before he existed.

Bilderdijk believed in the millennium that would be founded according to the Apocalypse and he assumed that Napoleon would be its builder, just as a few years ago some excited, irrational people believed in Hitler's millennium.

But hardly was the House of Orange back in the Netherlands when Willem Bilderdijk executed a right-about and begged at the new address. William I was generous and liberal enough not to punish Bilderdijk for his needless treachery, but it is perfectly natural that he refused to give him a professorship at Leiden. Bilderdijk, however, did not find this so and went away complaining and scoffing. One cannot deny he had poetic passion, a passionate nature. He was a picturesque figure, but he was surely no great poet and behaved like what is called "un villain bonhomme."

The really genuine poet of the beginning of the nineteenth century was A. C. W. Staring (1767–1841). In many respects he is akin to Hooft, both in his attitude toward life and in his pure lyric nature. After having completed his law studies he went, like Hooft, to complete his education at a foreign university and, again like Hooft, he later lived—not in a castle, it is true but in a stately country seat in the Province of Gelderland—the noble life of a poet, a wise, educated, cultivated man. Staring's poetic art is certainly meaner in quality, less penetrating and stately than that of Hooft, but he had the same sensitivity, pointedness, the same preference for a dashing arabesque, and as an artist and personality he is equally lovable. When at the

end of the nineteenth century a new critical attitude, with pitiless and not always just severity, rejected almost the entire work of the preceding hundred years, an exception was made for Staring. His exemplary poetic dignity and his gifts of mind and heart appeared incontestable.

What Staring was for poetry, Jacob Geel (1789–1862) was for prose: a witty, clever, careful stylist and a versatile scholar, the man who for the first time in the Netherlands sharply formulated the problems in relation to the conception of romanticism and classicism and treated them in a clarifying manner. Geel is and always will be the greatest essayist, in the strict sense of the word, that the Netherlands has ever produced. He wrote only one volume of prose, but this is still alive and significant for the readers of today, as if it had been written yesterday.

From Bilderdijk and Geel two currents start out, which we can trace a considerable distance into the nineteenth century.

Bilderdijk's fanatical, prophetically inclined Christianity met with response in many disciples. His belief in the apocalyptic millennium had power of attraction, especially for certain Jews who found in it the echo of their expectation of the Messiah. (Bilderdijk himself said: "A Jew who is faithful to God is Christian in his longings.") His followers, the poet Isaac da Costa (1758–1861), the latter's wife, Hanna Belmonte, and Abraham Capadose were baptized with great solemnity at St. Peter's church in Leiden. Round Bilderdijk and these enthusiastic, high-strung disciples a group formed that is called the Reveil: the awakening of a new Christian realization of life. This movement is of inestimable importance in the intellectual history of the Netherlands because from it proceeded a man like Groen van Prinsteren, who exerted a decisive influence on Netherlands politics. But literary works of real and lasting significance did not emanate from it. The work of da Costa, great in design and intention, was not proof against time; its human substance was completely lost in its verbose rhetoric.

Geel's point of view asserted itself indirectly in politics and led to the liberalism of Thorbecke, Groen's great opponent, but can be traced most directly and clearly in literature. One cannot speak of a "school": Geel's personality was too modest and removed from the public eye to found one, but the word "example" fits him excellently. Geel's example, both as regards his conceptions and his manner of writing, affected the three great prose writers of the nineteenth century: R. C. Bakhuizen van der

Brink (1810–1865), E. J. Potgieter (1808–1875) and C. Busken Huet (1826–1886).

Potgieter dominates the entire middle of the nineteenth century. He was the founder and leader of the periodical *De Gids* (The Guide) which, as far as I know, still exists and is in its 107th volume. He was considered a perfect prose writer, an inexorable yet just critic, and a pure poet. In short, Potgieter was the center and personified ideal of all who between 1840 and 1880 were liberal and practised belles lettres or were sincerely interested in them. The significance of Potgieter as leader and as literary figure can hardly be overestimated. But part of his writings is only accessible to us after great self-discipline and exertion. His critical work has been best proof against the years, and after that some of his great poems—*Florence* and *The Inheritance of a Country Squire*—have been able to maintain their position with proud positiveness. Together they form the most monumental poetic work of our literature, pregnant, full of scholarly contemplation, full of human reflections and of a truly great design and structure. Potgieter gives us the maximum that can be achieved with talent, supported by extensive and profound knowledge, a noble purpose and a perfect mastery of technique. What he lacks is a spark of genius.

Beside Bakhuizen van den Brink and Busken Huet, Robert Fruin (1823–1899) must be mentioned here. Bakhuizen and Fruin were primarily historians, but their sense of form and the purity of their language gave their compositions literary as well as scientific value. Huet was a born literary critic who, toward the end of his career, devoted himself to historical work and wrote two compilations of history of art which received great acclaim, *Het Land van Rembrandt* (Rembrandt's Country) and *Het Land van Rubens.*

It is not possible to form a clear idea of our literature in the nineteenth century without including in it the noble, quiet figure and stately, extensive work of A. G. Bosboom-Toussaint (1812–1886), most of which consists of historical novels in which, with a single exception, native material is treated. Mrs. Bosboom-Toussaint, with an undeniable and convincing epic talent, was one of the few genuine, born story-tellers in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century and one of the most richly gifted women that our country has produced.

But however highly one may speak of the many-sided merits of a Potgieter, a Huet, a Toussaint, however gladly and liberally one wants to give them all the praise that is honestly their due,

one must, in order to maintain correct proportions, state clearly and emphatically that the nineteenth century in the Netherlands produced, besides many talents, only one artist of real genius: Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820–1887), who became known by the pen-name which characterizes him: Multatuli. In Dekker's nature, and thus also in his uncommonly rich and vivid prose, we see for the first time the complete and harmonious synthesis of the two national qualities which we can perceive as enthralling antitheses throughout the history of Netherlands intellectual life, namely, the inclination to moralize, the old, innate urge and desire to preach and, as the only means of escape, lyric flight. Dekker is now the lyric moralist, now the moralizing lyricist. His life's work consists of dissertations which are really like outpourings, aphorisms, witticisms and fragments, animated without exception by a dark glow and formulated with cutting keenness. Even the two books by Multatuli that are considered novels, *Max Havelaar* and *Woutertje Pieterse,* are composed of a number of fragments frequently very loosely connected. They completely lack the set, traditional structure which characterizes the proper nineteenth-century novel. They are no worse because of that; on the contrary, they derive their value and charm from their freedom and their unconventionality, their whimsicality, their quick, surprising turns and their inexhaustible wealth of ideas and feelings.

Dekker's life was a life of passionate conflict. His vital force, his conviction and interest, were so great and so many-sided that he was unable to remain neutral with regard to a single problem of importance. The best period of his life was entirely dominated by the great problem, like none other in national importance, of the relation between the Netherlands and the Indonesians of our Asiatic territory, for which he invented the melodious name of Insulinde. By his actions as well as by his writings he rang in an entirely new conception of this relationship. This was, in the beginning, sharply and not always honestly opposed. But in the end the ideas defended by Multatuli with much fire were elaborated and generally accepted as basis of an administration of loyal collaboration.

Multatuli's importance for Netherlands Indies politics is outside the limits of this survey and of my competence, but his importance in the Netherlands literature is no less great. For although Dekker would have liked best to continue as reformer and prophet, he was by nature and always, even when he entered the political domain, an artist. He possessed the gift of the

seer, the inner passion and the sense of form, without which one cannot imagine an artist. Before him, the Netherlands language had rarely been handled so ardently and fervently, with such tempo and conviction. Multatuli's influence is still felt today, because he rehabilitated the spoken language and not only defended the "ordinary word" against the somewhat ceremonious loftiness which was peculiar to his best contemporaries, but raised it to be a serviceable, concise and penetrating literary means of expression. It is no wonder that in the years round about 1930 Multatuli found among young writers such ready-to-fight admirers (we may mention Menno ter Braak and E. du Perron); they defend the rights of sober language and natural style, as he did in his day.

Of all the writers of the nineteenth century, Multatuli is the only one who has remained alive after more than half a century. On a Potgieter and also a Huet, time has left its mark, and we read their works with a constant realization of living with them in the past. Only Multatuli's quick, lively and deeply penetrating prose makes the impression of having been written today.

It is therefore not absurd for us to consider Multatuli the precursor of the intellectual revival that took place in the Netherlands in every sphere between 1870 and 1880. He was not the only one who heralded this renewal, but he was among those in whom we perceive the first possibilities of a radical change.

THE REVIVAL OF THE EIGHTIES

The Movement of the Eighties represented a general longing for a deepening and purifying of the conception of art on the basis of a glorification of personality. This longing appeared not only in literature but also in painting, architecture and philosophy and was accompanied by a passionate criticism of the immediate past. The character of the new movement was mainly determined by a reflowering of individualism as a conscious ideal. From this it followed logically that criticism had to occupy an important place in it.

Far and away the most important poet, as far as pure lyric potentiality is concerned, was Herman Gorter (1864–1927), the author of *Mei* (May), a symbolic narrative that in a very short time became one of the classic works of our literature. In the same period Gorter wrote a number of short poems which were collected under the title *De School der Poëzie* (The School of

Poetry). In this, poetic individualism finds its richest and most glorious expression. Later, after having joined a then still young socialistic movement, Gorter wrote two philosophical poems, "Een klein Heldendicht" (A Little Epic), and the voluminous work "Pan." These contain a number of fragments of incomparable beauty, but as a whole they no longer satisfy us, because in them the thinker and politician too frequently imposes silence on the poet. The numerous little poems of his later period are also uneven. Beside utterances which represent Gorter at his best, we find uninspired exercises that sometimes strike one painfully as childish. But whatever shortcomings we can discover in Gorter's life-work as it now lies before us, it is on the whole of an unheard-of superabundance and radiant vitality. Of all his contemporaries Gorter exerted the deepest and most lasting influence on younger people.

We quote here the first verses of Gorter's great lyric poem *Mei,* verses which every lettered Netherlander knows by heart, "A new spring and a new musical note." (The translation that follows below is by Professor A. J. Barnouw.)

A new spring, and a new, musical note!
May this song sound as the song of the flute
I heard one summer day, before nightfall,
In an old town along the hushed canal.
'Twas dark indoors, but outside the still street
Gathered in dusk, and in the sky shone late
Daylight. A pale and golden glimmer fell
Across the gables on my window-sill.
Then a boy blew, clear as an organ pipe.
The notes shook in the evening air, as ripe
As tender cherries when a breeze begins
Among the bush its airy wanderings.
He strolled across the bridges and along
The water's edge, going slow, and scattering song
Like a young bird, and in unconsciousness
Of his own gladness with that evening peace.
And many a tired man, sitting at his ale
And supper, listened as to an ancient tale,
And smiled. A hand that pulled the window to
Paused for a moment as the piper blew.

Willem Kloos (1859–1938) was the theorist of the Movement of the Eighties, and he illustrated his principles with a number of truly human, deeply stirring poems. But he did not fulfill the very high expectations that were rightly entertained of him at

the beginning. After a period of intense intellectual life, he suddenly collapsed; a serious illness left nothing of his former passion, his former strength and lucidity of mind. He filled his long life with studies upon the history of literature, of secondary significance, wrote many critiques without conviction and without discernment and a series of 1500 absolutely unreadable, mostly ridiculous sonnets under the title, *Binnengedachten* (Inner Thoughts). The young Kloos, however, whom we honor as one of our masters, wrote about a hundred poems that seem to have been proof against time and a volume of theoretical essays that have as yet lost little of their value and nothing of their beauty. In 1883, Kloos established a periodical *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide) which was the center of the intellectual life of the Netherlands for about ten years but which lost all significance after Kloos' collapse.

Besides Kloos the editorial staff was formed by, among others, Albert Verwey (1865–1937) and Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932), two writers who occupied a very important place in the period 1880–1910. Of the two, Verwey made the deepest impression on his younger countrymen, while Van Eeden succeeded in procuring an international audience for himself. Verwey carried on the tradition of Potgieter. In a new time and a new environment he was the representative of intellectual passion. His work consists of a series of voluminous essays of lasting significance and of many poems which do not always correspond to our poetic ideals but, because of their noble content and stately form, rouse our interest and respect. Although himself not academically trained, he was appointed professor in Netherlands literature at the ancient University of Leiden and in this capacity he performed pioneer work by stripping higher education in literature of its all too scholastic constraint and by bringing about harmony between knowledge and insight.

Frederik van Eeden, whose first period was so strongly influenced by Thoreau that he gave the name "Walden" to the countryplace where he made experiments in cooperative cultivation of the ground, was a versatile man: a physician full of interest in psychiatry, poet, novelist, dramatic critic, sociologist and practical reformer. He ended his life and career as a Roman Catholic convert.

Frederik van Eeden was originally richly endowed but he lacked self-criticism, and the indeterminateness of his character was again and again detrimental to his work, which was consequently deficient in outline and stability. During his life he was

embroiled in so many theological disputes that public opinion and the critics did not succeed in forming an honest opinion of his character and value. Now that all the storms he raised have abated, it is generally observed that he enriched the Netherlands literature with some substantial works. First of all there is his allegory in three parts, *De Kleine Johannes* (The Little John), the first part of which is the best known and far and away the weakest; further, his drama in verse, *De Broeders* (The Brothers), great in design, rich, and magnificently varied; his psychological novel, *Aan de Koele Meeren des Doods* (By the Cool Lakes of Death); his comedy, *De Heks van Haarlem* (The Witch of Haarlem); several profound philosophical studies and a small number of good poems. And these are only the highlights of his voluminous work.

As a genuine writer of the Eighties, mention must be made of K. J. L. Alberdingk Thijm—who used the nom-de-plume, Lodewijk van Deyssel—born in 1869 and still living. He wrote two novels, *Een liefde* and *De Kleine Republiek* (A Love; The Little Republic), intelligent, painstaking school examples of what is called naturalism. But he is above all a critic, a critic of a particular kind: a lyric critic. He arrives but rarely at a well-considered, quiet, solidly grounded opinion; he damns or glorifies, he reviles or sings songs of praise. The content of practically all his writings has already lost much of its meaning, but the best is nevertheless saved by the unequaled beauty of his language.

In the School of the Eighties we must still reckon three prose writers of importance: first, Jacobus van Looy (1855–1930), who was at the same time a meritorious painter. Van Looy is a man of description, of plastic prose and of this he has produced several small masterpieces, but his real significance as a human being and an artist is seen only from his *Wonderlijke Avonturen van Zebedeus* (Wondrous Adventures of Zebedeus), a book in three volumes that stands entirely alone in our literature and that has no resemblance whatever to any work in foreign literature known to me. If one wants to find a vague similarity, one must compare it with one of the loveliest, most capricious books of the German Romantic Movement, *Kontraste und Paradoxen* (Contrasts and Paradoxes) by Frederich von Sallet. *Zebedeus* is a book full of the most exquisite discoveries, rich in unexpected nuances and changes, poetic, satirical, humorous and, in the true sense of the word, inexhaustible. Anyone who knows the life of Van Looy and his environment again and again discovers entertaining allusions to it, and anyone who studies the history of the Movement

of the Eighties and is able to fathom Van Looy's playful symbolism finds rich material in his *Zebedeus.*

The second prose writer alluded to was Louis Couperus (1863–1933), who is one of the few born "narrators" in our country. His work was very uneven. Next to novels of great significance and lasting value, he wrote cursory, entertaining works calculated for a cheap, temporary success. But Couperus at his best forms a steeply rising pinnacle in our new literature. His books have been translated into many languages: the English translation by Teixeira de Mattos became famous. His work consists of "modern" and of "historical" novels. On the whole the first are more personal in tone, stronger in characterization and more profoundly experienced. We may mention *Eline Vere,* a youthful work; *De Boeken der Kleine Zielen* (The Books of the Small Souls), four novels which together form a whole; and indisputably his masterpiece, *Van Oude Menschen, de Dingen die voorbijgaan* (Of Old People, The Things That Pass). In these books lives forever an atmosphere and a mentality which is characteristic of life, especially in The Hague, and in a particular period, namely circa 1900, an atmosphere and a mentality which were largely determined by Indian influences. Of all his contemporaries, of all the so-called Men of the Eighties, Louis Couperus was, in his somewhat mannered and nevertheless genuine refinement, the most picturesque figure and was at the same time as human being surely the most lovable.

Finally, there was Frans Erens (1857–1939). Born in South Limburg, he introduced into the "New Guide" a peculiar tone of his own: in a pagan environment he was and remained a Catholic and he knew, better than any of his young friends, the new literature of France. He published a few novelettes, which were distinguished by a tone of their own, innumerable volumes of essays and an autobiography which is of great importance for the knowledge of the New Guide period in the Netherlands.

Immediately after the first generation of the men of the Eighties, who gradually applied and carried on the principles of the movement, a number of prose writers of significance made their appearance, of whom we mention above all Frans Coenen (1866–1936) and Gerard van Eckeren (1876–).

As a playwright of international fame, Herman Heyermans (1864–1924) should be included here. Besides his plays, which were translated into many languages and played on many stages, he wrote innumerable frequently attractive and witty novelettes and some novels.

It is impossible and furthermore undesirable, when we speak about Netherlands literature, to associate with it the political boundaries of our country. Netherlands literature is not the literature of the Netherlands but of the regions where Dutch is spoken. The Netherlands itself has nine million inhabitants; the language sphere includes more than seventeen million Dutch-speaking people.

The writers who in the lately formed kingdom of Belgium, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, began the strongly romantic movement for the maintenance of their own language knew only Flemish and therefore demanded its recognition. This "Flemish" was a conception difficult to define. For, speaking philologically, no Flemish languages existed. There existed many splendid, rich dialects in the two Flanders (East and West), in Limburg, in Antwerp and in Brabant. Which of these dialects was the Flemish language for which there was such fierce struggle?

Natural development has brought the solution. From 1850 to the present day, but especially after the complete Flemishization of the University of Ghent, the Dutch language asserted itself in the South Netherlands also. With that the word Flemish, in its too wide and therefore incorrect meaning, is disappearing.

Official documents of Belgium authorities speak exclusively of the two vernaculars, Netherlands and French. All educated Flemings speak Dutch and *besides,* as do many of their North Netherlands brothers, one or another dialect. The contributions that the South has made to common inflexion and vocabulary are no less in value and number than those of the North. Those who are not well acquainted with Belgium and the Netherlands—countries which belonged together before the Reformation and are now again growing strongly toward each other—find it difficult to imagine this contrast which does not exclude a close bond. One cannot study the Netherlands without Belgium, nor Belgium without the Netherlands. Perhaps it would be better here to replace the political appellation by the geographical and to speak of North and South. In the past few years the intellectual bonds between South and North Netherlands have so tightened that, while retaining the shading, a philological literary unity is becoming ever more distinct. This phenomenon was made possible by the emancipation of the Catholics in North Netherlands. After that the influence of Catholicism grew steadily. There came about a mental rapprochement between the Roman Catholic South and the mixed (but, according to tradition, Protestant)

North. In the South, meanwhile, the influence of Latinity in its modern form of manifestation, French intellectual life, steadily decreased, facilitating the approach toward the North.

It seems necessary to round off the picture of Netherlands literature by including the works of South African writers. The fact that Afrikaans has developed in a most felicitous manner into an independent language, with a form of its own and above all a very peculiar, rich, enthralling vocabulary, must not blind us to its original oneness with Netherlands. When one surveys the literature in Afrikaans one discovers in it a number of figures of speech and notions derived from African nature and the African way of life, but one also discovers a subjection to Calvinistic traditions, a way of feeling, thinking and acting, which excludes any doubt of an inner relationship with the Netherlands. After all, the Afrikaans language and the still young but already important and rich Afrikaans literature have developed from the Netherlands. Our classics, the masters of the Middle Ages, and Vondel, Hooft and Luyken, are also the classics of the Africans. In some respects the Afrikaans language and conception is even closer to seventeenth century Netherlands than to the modern North Netherlands ways of thought and expression. I believe that Afrikaans and Dutch are equally benefited by the perpetuation of the memory of the common past.

The value of a language cannot be measured according to objective standards. In judging it we must simply go by the results achieved. In Afrikaans there are poems of such intriguing beauty as we possess but few of in Dutch. There are good novelettes, novels, plays; there are scientific, philosophical and religious dissertations written in Afrikaans which are in no single respect inferior to what is produced in this domain in other languages. People sing, pray and teach in Afrikaans, profound conversations are carried on upon every subject in Afrikaans. There is thus no longer any doubt regarding the serviceableness, richness and beauty of this young language.

The Flemings who in the first half of the nineteenth century began the fight against the systematic Gallicizing of the newly formed, independent kingdom of Belgium, immediately realized that they had to draw arguments from two wells: the medieval history of the Flemish provinces and the primitive strength of the people as revealed in folklore. The glorification of the past served to create models for the present; the glorification of the

lyric love of life of a firmly rooted country population served to give these models a new possibility of existence.

And right from the beginning these two tendencies have been fully present in the two great figures who completely dominate the Flanders of the nineteenth century: Hendrik Conscience (1812–1883) and Guido Gezelle (1830–1899)—Conscience by his wonderful ability—despite poverty of language and lack of psychological insight and sense of form—to revive the past and make it true and acceptable, and Gezelle by the spell of his sovereign poetship.

Those who judge Conscience according to purely literary standards come to an unfavorable conclusion concerning his work, but they thus do him and young Flemish literature an injustice. For one should not estimate works produced in a time of transition and conflict exclusively according to their artistic value. Indeed, Conscience's language is at the same time commonplace and bombastic, his characters lack the inner truth and vitality to make them people, his field of vision is as limited as his intellectual viaticum; but despite all these shortcomings Hendrik Conscience is able to assert himself, not only as a literary figure in a given period, but even as a writer seen from outside his time. He possessed a natural gift for narrative, for holding the attention of his readers who are really his hearers, and his love for Flanders and the Flemish past and his hope to revive Flanders through this love were so sincere and so great that they were able to save him from his rhetoric.

Gezelle's case is entirely different. Like Conscience he possessed the gift of captivating his readers and of keeping them captivated; he too cherished a love, at the same time human and superhuman, for Flanders; he too hoped to awaken Flanders to a rich, glorious new life, partly by reminding it of the riches and glory of the Flemish Middle Ages. But over and above that he was one of the greatest lyric poets that has ever lived in the two Netherlands. With heart and soul he lived the life of the simple and he elevated this to an unheard-of glory. In him worldly and divine love were not separated. He knew but one necessity: love of God, nature, his fatherland, people, mankind. . . . And in his childlike profundity, God and people and Flanders formed an indissoluble unity. He loved God because He had made people so weak and pitiful and Flanders so radiant with beauty and love of life, and he loved people and Flanders because he recognized in them God's greatness and goodness and purity. Guido Gezelle consecrated the new Flemish literature and immediately

raised it to such a level as had hardly been known even in the Middle Ages, which cannot be praised enough.

No revolution in any literature asserts itself unpreparedly and suddenly. The revival we know in North Netherlands as the *Movement of the Eighties* or the *New Guide* movement was, as we have seen in this survey, heralded and rung in by Eduard Douwes Dekker (Multatuli). And the corresponding phenomenon in Flanders, the *Of Now and Presently* movement (from the periodical *Of Now and Presently*) was prepared for, heralded and partly made possible by the poetic work that Gezelle had produced silently and secretly, unconscious of his great destiny.

The writers who made *Of Now and Presently* (later continued under the simple, proud name *Flanders*) a good and important periodical in Flanders, were, to mention only the principal ones, Stijn Streuvels (pseudonym for Frank Lateur) (1871), August Vermeylen (1872–1945), Herman Teirlinck (1879), F. Toussaint van Boelaere (1875) and the youngest, but as an artist the most enthralling, Karel van de Woestijne (1878–1929).

The *Of Now and Presently* writers undoubtedly underwent the influence of the principles which the young North Netherlands writers advocated. They of course knew French Symbolism through and through. They had access also to English and German literature. But all these influences were completely dissolved and assimilated. This was made possible by three factors: the strong personality of the writers concerned, the pronounced Flemish national character and finally the exceptional controversial position into which the Flemish were forced by the systematic suppression of Flemish and the Flemish will-to-live. In this way the *Of Now and Presently* movement acquired a character of its own, with its own aims and own color.

Those who fought for a young, free art had also, in the strict political sense of the word, to join in the fight for a liberated, rejuvenated Flanders. And this double fight was led by the young August Vermeylen. He saw, more clearly than any of his contemporaries, the great truth which he finally formulated and which remained the general directive for many years: "We must be good Flemings to enable us to become good Europeans."

Every intellectual movement is carried on by a few personalities who derive their importance in the movement from their personality more than from their artistic power. This is the case with August Vermeylen. Had he, aloof from the intellectual revolution of his time, written only *De Wandelende Jood* (The Wandering Jew), he would hardly have the right to a place in

this survey. The novel, which contains some fine passages written under the influence of Flaubert, had the double disadvantages of being written with a purpose and too "nicely." But in Vermeylen's rich and warlike life "The Wandering Jew" was not much more than an incident. As a whole, his second novel, which appeared in 1943, was not a success either. But the inestimable and immortal significance which he has for his people and for literature is based on his battling articles and his personal fight. Vermeylen's papers, contained in two substantial volumes, form a monument in South Netherlands literature. They are strong in argument, noble, strict and yet colorful in writing and rich in essential content. If one can read with success and pleasure controversial pamphlets and speculations on phenomena and figures of the day about fifty years after they were written, their lasting right of existence, I think, is proven conclusively. Besides this, Vermeylen rendered important services to the Flemish cause as member of the Senate and as professor at Ghent.

Vermeylen was the man who first saw and first formulated: a) that, every political fight, thus the Flemish one too, can end in victory only if one takes into account the mighty economic forces which are involved; b) that every national movement, thus the Flemish one too, attains its full unfolding and significance only in an international association.

The *New Guide* writer, Lodewijk van Deyssel, in North Netherlands and the *Of Now and Presently* writer, August Vermeylen, in South Netherlands set themselves the task of developing national possibilities to the utmost limits because they saw in this procedure, not without reason, the only means of giving their nation a place and a sphere of action in the new Europe.

August Vermeylen belongs among those leaders who have the rare good fortune to see a great part of their ideals realized. Beside and behind him a generation of artists grew up that made it possible and justifiable to speak of a Flemish Renaissance: prose writers, architects and painters.

Stijn Streuvels (1871) created a world of his own with laws and myths of its own, a world without complications and without nuances. Such systematic simplicity always suggests greatness in literature. Both nature and human beings in all their movements and transformations seem above the normal measure. Figures of such unusual dimensions and deeds of such unusual purport fall outside conceptions of time. That is why past and future do not assert themselves in Streuvels' work.

Stijn Streuvels' greatness is evident from the fact that despite

his irresistible inclination to simplify and arrest life, he always succeeds in keeping his nature natural and his people human. Though one may not expect penetrating analysis of the soul in novels of this kind, one is never annoyed in Streuvels by the rhetorical systematization which is the great danger for writers of this kind and which turns so much of Jean Giono's work into falsehood. Streuvels is genuine. His childlike surrender to the original facts of life springs from a deep and sincere need; his no less childlike longing to portray nature, animals and people in more than natural size, forms an inalienable part of his being. Thanks to this undeniable and essential genuineness Stijn Streuvels is one of the few who can dare to mix an elementary psychology with a primitive feeling for nature and to season it with folklore, without his characters giving us the impression even for a moment of being invented or affected. It is his absolute honesty that saves him from "literature" and that makes us accept his world unsuspectingly.

Next to Streuvels, who makes a legend of nature and man in their mutual agreement and contradistinction, Cyriel Buysse (1859–1932) is the typical "realist." He has very little disposition to mysticism and he sees nature only as the natural environment of his characters. And these people have the dimensions of the people we daily see around us. Buysse's realism is based entirely on the formula that became famous in the Netherlands literature. Iust for copying daily life. Buysse sees people and their actions sharply and pitilessly. His work is rich in striking psychological details. He understands, as no other, the art of describing environment according to the recipe of the French naturalists. And he is the born narrator. He knows the human value of anecdote, he knows how to dramatize it, sometimes wittily, sometimes touchingly. But he lacked entirely Streuvels' cosmic strength and deep love of life. He remains, even when he treats of subjects from rustic life, the homme du monde, clever and skeptical, who knows what his public demands and how it can be captivated.

Next to Streuvels' great conceits, next to Buysse's sharp, critical realism, little or not at all related to one another, rose a Herman Teirlinck (1879), witty, inexhaustibly ingenious, over-refined, lyrical, elegant, constantly changing and in movement. He wrote much, and that much is unequal in value. A novel like *Het Ivoren Aapje* (The Little Ivory Ape) is a mixture of surprising beauties and contemptible posturing. It is alternately original and of a most painful banality; it has elements of a modern city epic poem and of old-fashioned kitchen-maid literature.

His volume of stories, *Mijnheer J. B. Serjanszoon, Orator Didacticus,* grouped round the figure of a shy eighteenth-century epicure, is a sound masterpiece, enchanting from beginning to end, over-rich in sweet, nutty, skittish strokes and written in a Netherlands rich in arabesques but fitting the time and the figure of Serjanszoon in a natural way and therefore extraordinarily irresistible.

But despite this complete success in the domain of prose, the real significance of Teirlinck is in his dramatic work. Because of his plays and his theoretical conceptions, he became the great reviver of the dramatic art in Flanders and exerted a decided influence on the theatre in North Netherlands where his plays, and especially *De Vertraagde Film* (The Slow-Motion Picture), were frequently performed.

Finally we should mention Fernand Toussaint van Boelaere (1875), the writer of short, but in their conciseness and purity of writing, perfect stories. He is one of the few who can write coldly and loftily and nevertheless touch us. He wrote rustic stories in the style of the most refined symbolism and the effect was surprising. His best pieces are *Landelijk Minnespel* (Rural Courting), *Petruske's Einde* (Petruske's End), *Lente* (Spring), *De Doode die zich niet verhing* (The Dead Man Who Did Not Hang Himself) and *Turren.*

The word genius is indefinite in purport and scope and yet it is the only one we can use for a person who is undeniably driven by a superhuman force. We have spoken of Gezelle's genius; we must also speak of the genius of Karel van de Woestijne (1878–1929). And what a world lies between these poets!

In the case of Gezelle, life with its infinite riches is yet very simple, because all phenomena and persons may, in the last analysis, be reduced to their origin and final purpose: God. Nature, human beings, animals and things, all come from God and turn to God. And God, the Oneness and All, is supreme simplicity.

Karel van de Woestijne, on the other hand, who was a pious man, though with his whole being attached to the earth, wrestled with God all his life. In his work, worldly and heavenly love are so capriciously mingled that, compared with the Gothic Gezelle, he must be called a school example of the modern Baroque poet.

Although Gezelle's world may not be so simple as one thinks at first and after superficial consideration, it is a quiet, pure world compared with that of Karel van de Woestijne, in which lust and bitterness, joy and sorrow, excess and asceticism alternate

with a sometimes bewildering rapidity. If I were asked for a formula to characterize Van de Woestijne's poetry, I should like to suggest "embellished torment." In this poet everything is torment, everything ends in self-reproach, and this constant, silent anguish gives his poems, and especially his love poems, a tone that I have not met in any other poet in any language. He is a masterly player upon a language that generally sounds heavy and somber and complaining but sometimes suddenly lucid, exalted and pure. Karel van de Woestijne is above all and always a poet, even in his heavily written, pregnant prose works and in his criticism.

When the *New Guide* lost its significance and influence, after a highly felicitous existence of ten years, there came about a simultaneous reaction against the slogans proclaimed by this periodical. Impressionism, subjectivism, sensitivism began, together with naturalism and realism, to lose their enchantment and sense for the younger writers.

We now speak of the First Transition and generally mention in this connection four writers, lyric poets who, although originally strongly influenced by the Eighties movement, worked their way to a new attitude toward life and a new style. They are J. H. Leopold (1865–1925), P. C. Boutens (1870–1943), Henriette Roland Holst (1860), and J. A. der Mouw (1863–1919). Of these J. H. Leopold is the most touching poet, refined and at the same time childlike; P. C. Boutens, seen as a whole, created the most impressive lyric ensemble in our literature, noble, pure and cool; Henriette Roland Holst, like Gorter moved and driven on by a deep social passion, wrote a number of enthusiastic, human verses, innumerable theoretical writings and some excellent biographies (among others, of Garibaldi and Tolstoi); the philosopher Der Mouw did not begin to write poetry until suddenly in his fiftieth year, and he published under the pen-name Adwaita three volumes of poems, uneven in value but all, even the less successful ones, bearing the mark of an unusual and impetuous personality.

To this First Transition also belongs Arthur van Schendel (1872), in whose work the contrast to the *New Guide* is certainly most clearly expressed. Arthur van Schendel has never expressed himself critically or theoretically. His absolute rejection of naturalism is evident from the very nature of the voluminous lifework which he built up. In Netherlands textbooks Arthur van Schendel is sometimes called the representative of a neo-

romantic school. I have always contested this classification. Of all his predecessors and contemporaries, Van Schendel, with his strong and conscious classic conception, is the least romantic, unless one seeks romanticism not in the spirit and the treatment but in the choice of subject! It is customary to divide the production of Arthur van Schendel into two periods: the first, embracing the books which use late medieval and mostly Italian material, the second characterized by Netherlands motifs and a greater interest in the present. Like all grouping, this too has only partial validity. Despite an undeniable change, which occurred about 1930, Arthur van Schendel's work forms a closed, natural whole.

The most important and certainly the best known of what is called the first period is the *Roman van de Zwerver,* in two parts, *Een Zwerver verliefd* and *Een Zwerver verdwaald* (A Vagabond in Love, and A Vagabond Astray). The two nuclei of Van Schendel's being, the problem of destiny and the problem of loneliness, are present already in this early work.

The climax of the second period consists of the trilogy: *Een Hollandsch Drama* (in the English translation rebaptized "A House in Haarlem"), *De Rijke Man* (The Rich Man), and *Grauwe Vogels* (Grey Birds). Altogether, Van Schendel wrote about twenty novels, which are all without exception important and significant. One can discover slight differences in value, but his work shows no decline or failure. This writer has maintained an impressively high level for forty years. There is no point in listing many titles, especially since only a few of Van Schendel's books have been translated into English. However, mention must still be made of *De Waterman,* a sound masterpiece, and one must draw attention to Van Schendel's numerous fantastic stories, of which five volumes have now appeared. These enable us to see quite another aspect of his nature and talent; they are playful, wise, witty, surprising, and give us an impression of the writer's unlimited ingenuity. Arthur van Schendel is the greatest *living* prose writer of the Netherlands and one of the greatest Netherlands writers of all time.

It is customary to group a number of writers who came immediately after the first transition together under the name, The Generation of 1905, from the year in which they first began to manifest themselves. They are indeed contemporaries, but I have not been able to discover a deep inner resemblance between them, except that they are all, though not exclusively, mainly lyric poets. Epic prose has rarely been cultivated by this

generation. By far the most important figure among them is A. Roland Holst (1888); along with him there are J. C. Bloem (1887) and P. N. van Eyck (1887).

Holst is the poet of sea and wind, of dream-islands, of Elysian passion and cosmic longing; but even in his most unworldly poems he always maintains an undertone of profound, true humanity. Bloem's work is dominated by bitterness over lost illusions, failure and loneliness. He compares everyday reality with an idealized youthful glory and feels himself defeated. His three volumes constitute a touching evidence of human weakness that is magically changed by the wonder of poetry into greatness and strength. P. N. van Eyck, Verwey's successor as professor at Leiden, wrote, especially in the last few years before the invasion, a number of profoundly appealing essays. He built up a rather voluminous poetic life work, which is not always appreciated at its real value.

The Second Transition is represented by four poets of undeniable significance: J. W. F. Werumeus Buning (1891) and Victor E. van Vriesland (1892), M. Nijhoff (1894) and Herman van den Bergh (1897); of these M. Nijhoff, who wrote very little, is beyond dispute the greatest. He brought a completely new accent into our lyric, succeeded in realizing a wonderful sort of ecstatic objectivity and exerted a decisive influence on the younger poets. These young poets united in a periodical *De Vrije Bladen,* which in its turn produced three lyric poets of great significance: J. Slauerhoff (1898–1936), H. Marsman (1899–1940) and Hendrik de Vries (1896).

An intellectual movement derives its value and significance not from its extent but from its richness and tension. The movement that found its expression in the periodical *Of Now and Presently* was indeed richly diversified, and the young Flemish writers certainly did not lack tension. When one considers how Streuvels and Buysse, Teirlinck and Toussaint, Vermeylen and van de Woestijne came together here on the basis of one enthusiasm and how they placed their so thoroughly different personalities and talents at the service of one aim, we must come to the conclusion that those were incomparably beautiful years in Flanders from 1900 to 1914.

Such a movement never forms a closed whole. One cannot say exactly where it begins and ends nor ascertain with absolute sureness who belongs to it and who does not. We suppose, however, for the convenience of compiling manuals and surveys, that

Willem Elsschot, Felix Timmermans, Jan van Nijlen constitute a new generation, a transition from the Of-Now-And-Presently Flanders to the so-called "modern" or "younger" writers.

Timmermans (1886), who perhaps still more, and certainly not less rightly, than these others represents Flemish literature abroad, carries on the tradition of the rustic novel. His *Pallieter* —a rustic guzzler—caused a sensation and made a great hit. But I am of the opinion that this book has been overestimated and that the Flemish people are bitterly wronged if *Pallieter* is considered as the pinnacle, the compendium of the Flemish spirit. *Pallieter* represents, at best, one side of Flanders: good-living, joy in the earth's glories and enthusiasm for the most natural in nature. But here the presentation is exaggerated and too studied to make a real impression. Nevertheless, Timmermans wrote a masterpiece, *Boerenpsalm* (Peasant Psalm). This novel is a complete success because in it he does not let himself go as in *Pallieter,* but, on the contrary, restrains himself with an admirable self-control.

One cannot imagine a greater contrast than that between Felix Timmermans and Willem Elsschot, pseudonym of Alfons de Ridder (1882). Timmermans is inclined by nature to boisterousness, joviality and exaggeration, while Elsschot is frugality personified. His inner sullenness, his soberness and his systematic control characterize him as a man who loves tranquillity. He made his debut before the First World War with a novel about a Paris boarding house, *Villa des Roses.* This book attracted great attention, especially in North Netherlands, but there too almost entirely in literary circles. The general reading public was not attracted by this cynic wit, and in Flanders it was felt instinctively that this new writer possessed and developed a number of qualities of character which did not fit well into the traditional framework of art and society. Elsschot also wrote *Een Ontgoocheling* (A Disillusionment), *De Verlossing* (The Deliverance) and, during the First World War, *Lijmen.* But the indifference of his environment discouraged him so much that he put down his pen. Not until much later, around 1930, did appreciation of him begin and grow slowly, first in the Netherlands and then in Belgium. He then began to write again and published, rather quickly, one after another, *Kaas* (Cheese), *Tsjip en de Leeuwentemmer* (Tsjip and the Lion Tamer), *Pensioen* (Pension) and *Het Been* (The Bone). In these later works it became increasingly clear that cynicism and harshness served Elsschot to shield an almost childlike sensitiveness. This embittered scoffer

is in reality a defenseless man who suffers from his split personality.

Jan van Nijlen (1884), who published two detailed critical studies of the French poets Charles Péguy and Francis Jammes, is by nature exclusively a lyric poet, a lyric poet with a limited world but master in this world. In Flanders, where reality holds such great importance, he represents the "absentee," the man who, wherever he may be, knows but one desire—to be elsewhere. But in Van Nijlen this heavenly nostalgia is not a strong passion, which expresses itself in raptures, but a state of silent protest, mostly ironic, sometimes with a touch of bitterness, but always absolutely controlled.

During the First World War and shortly afterwards a double influence asserted itself in Flemish literature and especially in poetry. It was on the one hand that of German expressionism, on the other that of French poets of the school of the *fantaisistes* and of whom P. J. Toulet was far and away the most important.

The German impact is most noticeable in Paul van Ostayen, the French, in the poets who were named after the little periodical they founded, the poets of *Het Fonteintje* (The Little Fountain): Richard Minne, Reimond Herreman, Maurice Roelants and Karel Leroux.

Paul van Ostayen (1896–1928) was a new phenomenon in Flanders and, even if he founded no school, put his stamp on a number of contemporaries and followers. With all his talents he lacked spontaneity. His work (poems, stories and reviews) is intelligent (probably just a little too intelligent), special, full of striking discoveries. But our full appreciation is always withheld because we are disturbed by its deliberateness. In Van Ostayen's work theory is always present as theory and is not absorbed by the flesh and blood of the finished poem or piece of prose. Van Ostayen lacks naturalness. We see that he is constantly doing his best to be modern. Van Ostayen is counted in with a group of writers who came together in the periodical *Ruimte* (Space) and who turned against what they called the aestheticism of *Of Now and Presently*. They desired an ethical-social art, but this demand was difficult to rhyme with "pure poetry," the poetry of exclamation, adjuration and invocation, which Van Ostayen and his supporters cultivated. This whole movement, despite the great talent of several of its adherents, makes an impression of uncertainty and impurity.

The men of *The Little Fountain*—a vivid little periodical—who had set themselves a limited task, were able to express themselves

infinitely more clearly within that limitation. In their work, playfulness of mind and feeling found expression in the most enchanting manner, and this work reveals, what is particularly striking, that those who scoff at all big words and all weighty slogans, prove considerably more genuine, warm, purely *human* in their being and their work, than the neo-humanistic poets who proclaimed a new society.

This was a time of hesitating, searching and fighting. It was to be given to a great poet to sum this up in one work, small in extent but great in scope and intent. The first really superior poetic figure after Van de Woestijne is Marnix Gijsen (pseudonym for J. A. Goris), who was to humanize the modernism of *Ruimte* and modernize the humanism of *Het Fonteintje.*

The work of Marnix Gijsen (1899) is the fulfillment of the promises made by both groups, by *Ruimte* and by *Het Fonteintje,* and gives in verse that is strongly personal the *synthesis* of the poetry of revelation and the poetry of confession. One can hardly overestimate the significance of Gijsen's *Het Huis* (The House). It is, considered by itself, a collection of poems almost without fault and it is, besides, a milestone in the development of Flemish poetic art. One rarely finds poetry in which *all elements* and qualities are united in such a happy manner. After *The House,* Marnix Gijsen wrote only a few poems, which appeared in periodicals. These show a change, in so far as they have become much more fervent and darker in tone. Moreover, Marnix Gijsen is, together with Van de Woestijne, the best verse critic that Flanders has ever possessed. His critical writings derive their value from the fact that he is absolutely free from the prejudice of any theory.

Gijsen's important contemporaries, Maurice Roelants (1895) and Gerard Walschap (1898), have devoted themselves mainly and exclusively to the novel.

Of these two—who, though contemporaries, manifest little mutual relationship—Maurice Roelants is the closer to the *Of Now and Presently* writers, as far as his manner of writing is concerned. But he differs from them because of his more subtle psychology and above all of his far stronger feeling for the aesthetic value of moral nuances. Roelants has developed a style of novel all his own: clearly and simply he states his problem, clear and simple are his characters, clear and simple his plots. The whole is enacted in a calm, transparent atmosphere, and yet—this is Roelants' strength and peculiarity—we have constantly, in the midst of all this clarity, the feeling of experiencing

a wonder, of participating in untold secrets—a mystery in full daylight. Roelants wrote three novels: *Komen en Gaan* (Coming and Going), *Het leven dat wij Droomden* (The Life We Dreamed) and *Alles Komt Terecht* (Everything Comes Right) and an excellent novelette *De Jazzspeler* (The Jazz Player).

Beside Roelants' purity and modesty, Gerard Walschap's mysterious intensity, his irresistible driving power, his inclination towards extremes, are very striking. The element of good taste, strongly evident in Roelants, is lacking in him. But in its place he offers an urgent power of conviction that never fails to impress. The standard of all Roelants' work is very high; in Walschap's we find the very best, a burning veracity, side by side with the worst, an impetuosity that has became mania. But one important and characteristic quality he has in common with Roelants: his disdain for scenery, for local color, in short, for the accessories, for all that distracts from the psychology and action, that is to say, from the story in its essential meaning.

His great novel, *De Familie Roothoofd* (The Roothoofd Family), a trilogy in three parts, *Adelaide, Carla* and *Eric,* is a masterpiece; *Trouwen* (Marrying), *Sybille* and *Houtekiet* are excellent novels, each with a character of its own, and an autonomous existence in literature. Walschap, a strong, tormented mind, with a splendid, rough and honest temperament, is one of the great figures of Flemish prose.

The literature of South Africa because of its intrinsic value deserves separate and lengthy consideration. Here I can give only a concise survey, merely to round off the picture of Netherlands literature.

South African literature begins shortly after the peace of the Union (1912) with writers like Eugene Marais (1872–1936), J. D. du Toit (Totius) (1877), Jan Celliers (1865–1940) and C. L. Leipoldt (1880). We call these, although two of them are still alive, the "classics," and they form the first "generation."

These writers, appearing shortly after the tragic war, between 1900 and 1910, aroused great interest in the Netherlands as well. And they fully deserved this interest; for, besides their proof that deeply experienced, euphonious poems can be written in Afrikaans, they introduced a new spirit and, above all, a new feeling. Netherlands readers enjoyed both the undeniable relationship and the equally undeniable difference. Above all, the most important critic of the Movement of the Eighties, Albert Verwey, has

followed the development of the young Afrikaans literature with love and correct comprehension.

Eugene Marais' poems are collected in a small volume, and this little book stands as a beloved monument at the beginning of modern Afrikaans literary history. It is not great, but pure, noble poetry, which derives its significance, however, from the fact that it originated during precisely those first years and in a South Africa that was struggling upwards with incredible strength of mind. Totius (J. D. du Toit) wrote religious and patriotic songs, among which there are some of great beauty, and he made an excellent Afrikaans rhymed version of the psalms. J. D. Celliers, a kindly narrative talent, will remain famous, above all on account of some lovely nature impressions. Of these four, C. Louis Leipoldt, a physician living in Capetown, is the most remarkable figure because of his versatility, his whimsicality and his vitality.

Modern South African literature is dominated by the mighty figure of N. P. van Wijk Louw (1906), without doubt the greatest writer that South Africa has produced up to now, and beyond that one of the greatest writers of all the domains in which Dutch is spoken. He united in himself all the elements that make a great poet: a strong feeling for form, a sweeping lyric power, the ability to conjure up living characters and an inexhaustible vocabulary. Like none other, he has known South Africa, with all its problems deeply rooted in the past, and suffered there, as none other, and this intimate, indissoluble unity with his country has in no way cut him off from the rest of the world. Van Wijk Louw always sees South Africa as part of the world and the South African man, with his strong peculiarities, in the midst of humanity, and he always considers the intellectual problems of the Union in connection with the intellectual problems of the world. Thus he represents, because of his universal disposition, the classic ideal of the poet, who is above all poet but is at the same time thinker, politician and seer. His work consists of three volumes of poems, the last of which, *Gestaltes en Diere* (Figures and Animals), contains a number of masterworks; a great epic poem *Raka,* which has for the young South African literature the significance of Gorter's *Mei* for the Netherlands, a chorus to be spoken and two volumes of essays. South African literature, which has developed very happily since 1900, reached world standard for the first time in N. P. van Wijk Louw.

For all who have followed the development of South Africa, it is a magnificent, gladdening miracle that, from the original

Netherlands colonists, through years of continual struggle and privation, in a relatively short time, a new people and a new culture with a strong character of its own have been able to develop. African literature, with its variety, its vitality, its vividness and its strong personality, constitutes an important part of the African national existence. This course of events should particularly interest American readers, since they know from their own experience how from a language and literature a new language and literature can develop that differs greatly from its origin and yet remains inwardly connected with it.

LITERATURE BETWEEN THE WARS

Coming to the literature and especially the verse of the period between the two wars, I feel obliged, first, to draw attention to one important point, which is, in my opinion, that the essential changes in Dutch writing are most completely and clearly revealed in poetry. The prose of the years between the wars is of the greatest significance, especially that of Menno ter Braak, E. du Perron and S. Vestdijk, who are represented in this anthology. But the prose does not represent the intellectual life in the Netherlands so completely and convincingly as does verse.

Thus, if in the following pages literature and poetry are for practical purposes identified, it is primarily because this is in keeping with my personal inclination, but at the same time, more consciously, in order to impress readers as much as possible with the value and nature of the new intellectual movements in the Netherlands.

I use the word "new" here, but not without wishing to emphasize that in my opinion poetry is not bound to a period and still less is determined by time or anything temporary. It is necessary to realize that there is no essential difference between old and new poetry, or, in other words, that the miracle that makes a poem poetry was the same in the Middle Ages as it is now and will remain the same to the end of time.

If there are no two kinds of poetry, there are two main variations. And these we see side by side in the Netherlands from the earliest times until today. It is always difficult to apply precise words to a matter so full of mystery and dangers, but, for the sake of comprehensibility, I will use the terms revelation poetry and confession poetry, knowing that in their absoluteness they are incorrect.

Revelation poetry is poetry that is built up (not exclusively, but mainly) of motifs taken from the subconscious life of the poet; confession poetry is poetry that is built up (again not exclusively, but mainly) of motifs taken from the conscious life of the poet.

In the first case inspiration predominates, in the second, experience. But it is necessary to emphasize that the two kinds never occur in perfectly pure form. In revelation poetry there are elements of confession; in confession poetry, revelation breaks through. Conscious and unconscious life, experience, inspiration, memory and supposition are, in *every* poem, closely intermingled.

In the Middle Ages we have already seen, and there very clearly, the difference between revelation and experience, between mysticism and morality. And we can perceive these two currents in our entire literature. They always exist simultaneously. It is only that in a given period more attention is paid to, more preference is shown for, the one than the other. And, to come to our own time, we see side by side at the beginning of the Eighties, equally admired and praised, the typical confession poetry of Kloos and the not less typical revelation poetry of Gorter. Anyone a little informed on this subject immediately observes the difference, the profound difference, between a poem in which Gorter conjures up, with a few simple words, a world of play and light from nothingness and a poem in which Kloos makes us share his despair and his passion. These two forms of poetry we constantly see side by side in the period which occupies us in this section, the period 1920–1940. But before going into details, I must revert to what was said at the beginning: the adjunct of time, especially in this case, is completely arbitrary. On literature in general and on the Netherlands literature in particular, the war of 1914–1918 exerted no real and profound influence.

Strangely enough, the at that time eighty-year-old Penning showed considerably more feeling for actuality than the eighteen-year-old Marsman. Not that I consider this feeling for actuality a special merit of a poet; on the contrary, I am merely pointing out that the older men were more strongly influenced by the circumstances of war than the younger were. I myself lived in the Netherlands from 1915 to 1918 and in the midst of the literary life of those days, and however passionately pro-French we may have been at that time, on the whole the war was and remained an unimportant, that is, small and unessential, element of what was produced in those years. In the period that immediately fol-

lowed the Armistice, the influence of world events asserted itself more strongly, even if indirectly. For during a short time German expressionism exerted its influence upon the Netherlands too. It was a very transient phenomenon and indeed the expression of a mentality which was closely connected with the facts of the day.

The group of the "moderns" in North Netherlands was formed, first, by H. Marsman (1899), J. Slauerhoff (1898–1936) and Hendrik de Vries (1896), to confine myself to the most important figures.

During or shortly after the war of 1914–1918, Marsman wrote the magnificent poems that constitute the first section of the first part of his Collected Works. He was to exert a strong and lasting influence on his contemporaries. Marsman himself has characterized this youthful phase as his vitalistic period. What this vitalism was he formulated as he took leave of it. it was a longing to be absorbed in a nameless life, in a dynamic community. It was valor and leadership. The poet was seer, supreme example and at the same time one among millions.

This sort of verse, built upon motifs which the subconscious provides, is strongly bound to the personality of the poet. If he, with great inner riches, does not possess a strong sense of form, the work soon declines to formless incomprehensibility or to a most unbearable kind of rhetoric. And so we see that under the influence of Marsman and Hendrik de Vries, the two purest poetic figures of that generation who expressed themselves in the periodical, *De Vrije Bladen,* a number of Epigones appeared who misused a terminology which was for them an artistic pose.

These Epigones, with their rhetoric that was mockingly called the rhetoric of the angels and of blood because these motifs again and again cropped up, made a strong reaction necessary. This was constituted by the periodical *Forum,* under the initial leadership of Menno ter Braak, E. du Perron and Maurice Roelants.

The verse that was produced and accepted shortly before and during the existence of *Forum* is in almost all respects a contrast to the "high" or rather true poetry of a Marsman or De Vries.

There has existed from the beginning of literature until today didactic poems, occasional verse, chronicles in verse and rhymed wisdom. And there is no reason to withdraw these modes of expression entirely from our attention. If in connection with *Forum* I speak of unpoetic poetry, I must explain its origin as a revulsion after a period of all too poetic poetry; the "over-poetic" means in this connection the far-fetched, the false. Those who imitate always exaggerate, because they lack the inner moving

spring that determines and limits action. The protest of *Forum* was thus *not* against a Marsman or a Slauerhoff but against the bustling, inconsiderable writers in their train. As a matter of fact, Marsman and Slauerhoff soon belonged to the trusted collaborators of the review. And *Forum* was not against Anthonie Donker, whose poetic gifts were undisputed, but again against his followers who cultivated a neo-Parnassian, that is to say, impersonal picturesqueness. The men who founded and managed *Forum* knew that their aesthetics, which ended in anti-beauty declarations, was a phenomenon of the time and thus a temporary phenomenon with a definite and limited aim and consequently a definite and equally limited scope. The fairytale of a ter Braak, who was supposed to be insensible to "high" poetry, belonged to the malicious fighting tactics of the expressionists' threatened followers. Ter Braak knew, perhaps better than they, the value of the work of A. Roland Holst, J. C. Bloem, H. Marsman. And E. du Perron as a young boy already defended, when no one in Flanders and the Netherlands dared do so, the *poesie pure* of Paul van Ostayen. But what they all abhorred was the posing parroters of Marsman, Engelman, van Ostayen and Gijsen, who did not know the true meaning of their models and imagined they were equals.

It was not the wish of the *Forum* writers to disparage poetry—just the contrary, to restore to poetry its worth and power of effect by making the bad verse, which throve luxuriantly around it, ridiculous and hence impossible. The slogan of "everyday language" was started. And in 1931 Menno ter Braak wrote in a copy of his first novel for one of his friends: "To the brother-in-arms, for the ordinary word." With this they had come to a stand as unmistakable as possible concerning poetry, for poetry in principle is the *ordinary word.* They believed that this ordinary word should be preferred to lies, that is, to words that were passed off as unusual but were really not so. *Forum's* fight, which forms a closed period, was a fight for sincerity. That poetry was occasionally hard-pressed caused no great concern, because in the last instance the outcome would again benefit true poetry. *Forum* was thus in a certain respect a *reversed* New Guide. The New Guide put genuineness and loftiness in the first place against the false pedestrian poetic art of 1860–1875. *Forum* also demanded genuineness but deliberately made itself "pedestrian" so as to expose as false the current loftiness of the Epigones, in order to be able to fight against them more effectively.

But *Forum* too was followed by a reaction, which was bound

to come. Poetic art in the exalted sense, as this has been understood throughout all ages, cannot be conceived of without revelation from the subconscious, without the wonderful testimonies of a life deeply hidden within us. Reasonable poetry forms a contradiction in terms. So, when the necessary purifying process of *Forum* was completed, the young poets, who were not born to imitate, soon realized that one could not live and work upon this basis. Critical, moralizing poetic art has always a limited task and possibility and never contains nuclei from which a new existence can develop. After the predominance of reason, there came of itself a renewed interest in the irrational. No really great poetry can be built upon a critical foundation. Just as the *Vrije Bladen* tired itself out in exalted rhetoric, *Forum* tired itself out in vulgar rhetoric. This was not the fault of the *Vrije Bladen* or of *Forum*—both periodicals faithfully fulfilled their tasks—but was due to the law of nature, according to which, when the necessary things have been said by the people designated, the parroters know nothing better to do than to distort the original principles into a mocking picture. No one could be so astonished and annoyed as the founders of *Forum* were at the bad influence their concept exerted. The disillusionment, necessary to them through a coincidence of circumstances and in a limited period, withered away to a dishonorable fashion. The proposal of an unpoetic poetic art was accepted as a relief by all who, sometimes, but rarely, equipped with talent, were born unpoetic. Irony, only justifiable as a form of self-defense, became in their hands a bourgeois pedestrianism which both the *Forum* and the youngest generation loathed.

Even while in the Netherlands a small group of disciples, and part of the reading public, was still attracted by a poetic art which, militant and commonplace, had kept no more than a few external forms of poetry, the attention of the younger generation turned to an irrationalistic surrealism. The irrational was declared to be the origin and beginning of every poetic possibility; doubt and inquiry, the cause of all the misery in poetics. It was maintained that as long as consciousness predominates, there can be no question of poetry. He who experiences and recognizes poetry as revelation can hardly do anything but reject every rational objection with force and indignation. For the poets of this surrealist school it was exclusively a question of free and above all uncontrolled expression. This leads irrevocably to the glorification of automatic writing: the absolute can be approached only if we succeed in putting both will and intellect out of action. In

this way one achieves Perfect Attention, that is to say, complete absence of interest, with, as a practical result, the possibility, means and purpose of revealing the mysterious powers that come from us but are more than ourselves and use us in order to reveal us to ourselves. One sees how far we are here again from poetic art, from literature in general, which aims at the confirmation and glorification of personality. Poetry is, according to the taste of surrealists, unconditional surrender. Their kind of poetry excludes thought, in the sense that for the poet word and idea are born simultaneously, are equal and interchangeable; the word is idea, the idea is word.

A number of the Dutch poets who belonged to the new irrationalistic movement, opposed to the reasonable and critical *Forum* writers, did not always remember the axiom that the treasures of the subconscious could only become art through form, through a rational arrangement. I still believe that one approaches truth most closely with the concept of a poem in which the everlasting impact between the rational and irrational is crystallized. The poem is thus at the same time rational and irrational and yet something different and something more: a new order in which the word contrast is dissolved.

The African poet, N. P. van Wijk Louw, is convinced that all intellectual occurrences of real importance originate from polar tensions. The poetic is thus neither rational nor irrational but coincides with the tension between the rational and irrational. We can vary the poles: between form and content, between reality and dream, between good and evil, between life and death. Here I see a possibility of dissolving the antithesis between talk poetry and the stammering of the surrealists: poetry is neither sensuous nor transcendental but originates from the tension between sensuous and transcendental.

Dutch writers between the two wars moved then, as we have seen, from expressionism (under German influence) via *Forum* (in which a distant relationship with the group of French "fantaisistes" can be felt) to a surrealism curbed for Netherlands use. Characteristic of the first movement is the glorification of speed, strength, passion (dynamism); of the second, doubt and local association, expressing itself in irony and a popular choice of words; of the third, the diving into the depths, half Freudian and half somnambulistic. The *Forum* movement is thus a short attempt at rational classicism, between two outbursts of romanticism.

In this survey I have tried, by means of a rapid succession of

motifs, to create the impression of a living literature. In so doing I was constantly aware that for interested foreigners the indication of general tendencies and ideas will signify more than the characterization of personalities whom they do not know and, if they do not have Dutch at their command, cannot learn to know.

I hope circumstances will permit this book of Netherlands prose to be followed by a translation of the best Netherlands poems of seven centuries: for without that the picture is not complete.

Now that the Netherlands is resuming its independent existence we impatiently await what Netherlands writers have thought and written during the occupation.

J. GRESHOFF

Translated by MAURICE T. GROEN *and* JO MAYO

PART I

THE RENAISSANCE OF 1880

Jacobus van Looy

THE DEATH OF MY CAT

IT WAS FREEZING HARD ENOUGH TO BURST STONES. FROM THE PATH down below came the running conversation of two men who were late. Their talk rose along the smooth surface of my studio window and the beating of the soles of their shoes upon the hard ground froze into the rarified air, sharpened by the cold, and became as pure as the high voices of young boys. I saw how the bitterly cold night frost started to spin her treacherous needlework of frost flowers into the lower corners of my windows and gradually covered them. Before me the fire crackled and the stove spread a delightful glow. I had put my old easy chair as close to it as possible and was thus drenching my body with its heat; I looked straight ahead and watched the fantastic figures develop on the big windows.

Where could my cat have disappeared? She had been gone for three days. I had been looking for her for hours. What pleasures could an animal derive from wandering around on such a bitter-cold night that would murder anything that was delicate and needed protection. In the patch of ground before the door there was nothing to be had. The old grass stood there frozen, white like old hair, dead like the dead soil, and in the garden next door it wasn't any better. Was she at the neighbor's, with the black tomcat? Perhaps she had been killed; the boys along the path used slingshots, training them between latticework on the cats that wandered about. They would sell the skins, and they had such beautiful fur—oh, if those hateful boys had killed her!

Where could she be all this time, just now, when I wanted her here with me, when I felt so lonely, and she was so gay as she played; now that I wanted to hear her walk around in her dignified manner in the attic, or as I should see her silently make her way to her favorite spot next to me on the easy chair, carrying her striped tail high like a plume of vanity? I wanted to see her lie down behind the stove, blinking her eyes at the red glow, see her stretch her legs in lazy comfort and then lick her long body,

making it glow with her rough red tongue. Look how the black rings in her fur had started to shine happily under the constant application of her elastic tongue in long strokes along the back, cleaning the nimble body! Sometimes she would stop suddenly, still stretched out, lifting her head and pointing her ears, the eyes wide open and glittering like amber, and the thick tail beating furiously on the floor. Did she hear a mouse or perhaps a bird rummaging in its nest on the roof? But her round pupil again narrowed like a curtain to a thin slit; she again lay stretched out to her full length, and her purrs came contentedly from between the white whiskers. How I should love to see her lie again on the red glowing floor made of old wooden boards, luxuriously stretched out, like a miniature royal tiger on a red rock, warming himself, satiated with food, with glowing eyes in his mighty voracious head, yawning and stretching and blinking at the sun!

On my large barred window there was a wir-war, a quick spinning hither and thither of thin threads of ice, advancing and retreating, zigzagging, straight out and curved like a hoop, shrinking and breaking and shooting out like splints of broken glass. On the opaque background of the aqueous precipitation it was like an etching; from all sides the frost flowers would shoot out, putting forth blossoms on pane after pane.

Didn't I hear the mewing of my cat coming out of the frosty night? There was a steel-blue reflection behind the crystals on my window. Around the house I felt the night stiffening in a still greater cold. My tiled roof was surmounted by icicles and rough white stretches as from high up in the sky more blue cold descended and more white frost covered the ground, until the air seemed to shrink with it, and the last bit of life was obliterated pitilessly under the haughty splendor, under the far-off glittering of the severely blinking stars. Didn't I hear the mewing of my cat, plaintive-sounding like a feverish child? . . .

Then I went down and out in the night to look for her on the path; but there was no trace of the cat, there was nobody, there was nothing, nothing but cold darkness and clear cold. There was but icy-blue sky, an endless stretch of glaze, scratched and pinpointed with stars, jeweled sparks, like frozen drops of light, so cold, so tingling around the phosphorus stream of the Milky Way, which like a much used skating rink, devoid of its hard glow, goes straight through the field of heaven. Like the dome of an enormous ice hall the heavens stood over the vast land, above the row of the last houses of the streets of the most recently-

built quarters, massive black shadows against the extinguished halo of the city lights, a dull stony darkness, in which two or three illuminated window squares glow with friendly red light. The sky curved more chillily and clear above the dark sheds which disappeared in the entangled masses of the factory buildings, in the midst of which the chimney rose like a gigantic icicle into the sky, also above the houses of the villagers along the now dark and cold, sandy path, with the little windows shut tight, leaning against each other, blunt, puny and pitch-black, the dwellings of Samoyedes in the silent northern night, so lost in this terrifying numbness.

In this great and outside deathliness the street lamps along the path were a shrill child's game in a house in which death has taken place, still, red-glowing candles, put there by fearsome hands next to the body of the dead ruler.

But the warmth I had taken along from upstairs had already long vanished and the clothes had been aired, the cold penetrated my skin like the pricks of a needle deep into the flesh; I felt death by freezing crawling up through the soles of my shoes, up toward my heart, as I stood there; trembling and wishing for heat and light, I retraced my way along the path, called out once more, saw a small red cloud of smoke, which was my breath, heard the echo of my own voice as if returned by steel walls, and then I was inside again in the darkness of the staircase and went unhappily upstairs.

My large lamp hung like a sun from the center of the ceiling, it was reflected in the back of a canvas, which stood turned around on an easel and threw a vague shadow upwards. I filled the stove with coal, because I wanted to keep it glowing, and then I slid down again in my easy chair, with all the pleasure of feeling the heat between my knees. Where could the animal be? If she were still alive, she must freeze to death, because nothing as small as my little cat could withstand cold like this.

But it was impossible to remain quiet; restlessly I began to pace back and forth and every time I came near the window again I saw more ice flowers on it; the mysterious procedure continued without stop. The leaves of the ice flowers now thickened, every leaf was surrounded by a field of white weeds. The night outside was closed out, the light of the lamp sent forth beams, made yellow golden threads shimmer amidst the icy pattern.

That was an exotic flora: there were flowers, complete clusters of crystal flowers and a rich tangle of frosted needles; there were winter tulips with scalloped leaves, striped like summer carna-

tions, with sharp edges and indentations; there were beaker flowers, open like the jaws of a fish, veined morning glories, dry medicinal herbs, white frosted foliage; there was a wild profusion of worthless weeds and the rich ostentation and contortion of hothouse orchids; there were pointed thistles and whole bunches of hairy stinging nettles, and wild chervil. It was all a wild growth, windblown small stuff, all entangled; it had the appearance of a rough field crossed by paths made by men with heavy wooden shoes; denuded and savage was this lush vegetation, flattened out as are wild plants by a violent wind-storm.

Look, there, way at the top of the window, a pane swept by the shadows of a growth as I had often seen it in the country, dark shadows beneath the surface of the water, at the bottom of a pond; I could watch them grow here, and become the ragged skeletons of the leaves of trees kept between the pages of an old book; and lower down, there they became strong stems, streaking across the glass, or as leaves hanging down, or like plumed reeds, or waving, floating grass, or the long green swords of the gladioli! Small flakes, snowdrops, grow hidden amidst them. There was a growing crystalline metrical system and the sinuosity of plants, metrical flowers, prisms and octagons forming ferns, the mineral wealth grown from thousands of pine needles and the fine branching-out of reindeer moss; there were plumes of proud peacock's feathers and also the hairy brooms and the stinging of bunches of cat's whiskers. Oh, it was beautiful, those white frost flowers in the winter garden of my window-panes, that became a rough surface of stars and stems, of foliage and crystals.

Was it not possible that my cat might be in the garden next door? She loved trees and was crazy about being independent, as indeed she was; she liked to sit in the upper branches to spy upon birds; she liked to sit high up in the wind, firmly ensconced in the fork of trunk and branch; once she climbed so high that she did not dare come down again and stayed there even under a storm of hailstones that intended to drive her out and then she had had to be fetched down. I had given her a beating then, and if she should come back now, I should beat her again and teach her to give up her mania for always running away, thus leaving me all by myself.

Bah, that kind of an animal; she was just like the rest of them, always on the lookout to please herself! Bah! Wasn't that her nature?

But all this still did not give me power to do anything. I continued pacing back and forth, from the white frosted window to

the red-hot stove and then again to the frost-flower-covered window, up and down, like a bear in its cage. I wanted to read, but alas, on every page appeared a cat's head, and as for work—how can one work when one has lost something precious. Bah! work—wasn't work, drudging away everywhere. Bah, work! Brrr, it was cold here. It became as freezing here as outside. Come, let me put some more coal on the fire and then. . . . Listen! there is the hoarse shriek of the nightboat on the Amstel, it is getting late. How late? I do not hear the ticking of the clock any longer, the clock has stopped; but the ship has to tear the ice asunder, I think it must break up everything in its way. Listen, there it goes again, somewhat nasal; it gurgles from the smokestack; it is as if the noise came through a fog. Was there going to be a fog? Frost and fog, that is weather for haddock, and haddock's heads and food for my cat.

She has already been gone for three days, that Gypsy.

Where, oh where could she be?

How nice it is here, the stove is nice, the heat is nice! It rises pleasantly along the hard steel of the pipes, it goes up in trembling waves, it weaves fantastic figures around the branches of the pipes; it goes up into the low beams under the roof, it gathers into a little smoke in the golden glow of my lamp. Thus it fills the attic, my domain, with lazy dreams, thus it awakens desire for continued existence in sweet comfort, when one rubs one's hands from satisfaction; what do I care about the great death outside, though the winter with its tyranny of ice weaves as a whim of utmost charm a garland of flowers for my home? . . .

Where could she possibly be? . . .

Could she be lying between the trunks of the trees of the next-door garden; or was she lying dead in the dry crackling shrubs underneath, as she had fallen from a high tree; would she be lying there, crooked on the ground or sunk in the half-rotten leaves? Dead, dead, insensible to cold or weather, and deaf to my calls. . . .

Or would she be lying, stretched flat on the empty field, in the white grass, like nothing that anybody could find; stretched out dead in the too cold winds, in a hole which a horse's hoof had made when it was still summer? Murdered. . . . O, my small, royal cat, if you should have died thus, if you have disappeared in such a fashion, I shall build you, out of the treasure of my heart, a broad clean grave, a mausoleum built from ice!

For that the whole heaven is mine, high and cold as it may seem, I will take from it the threads of ice and weave from it a

shroud delicate around your smallness. I shall cover you with the flowers of the cold, the leaves of snow, with the down of the frost and the brilliants of ice. I shall stretch you out in my palace of the dead. There is a vault of blue crystals, and there the stars will be your mortuary candles. . . .

But what is that? No, this time I wasn't mistaken.

It was mewing and it came from near by, from behind the door. Jumping up, I tore open the door. Brrr . . . what cold, the walls are white, the street door is ajar. Left open. But there she sat on the mat. So small, so small. Brrr . . . how bitter cold. She no longer stands up. She blinks her eyes at the brilliant light from the attic. Irritated and a little too hurriedly I step over her and give a wee push with the point of my shoe. There, then. Slowly she now goes inside, so thin, all skin and bones. . . . She moves silently, with little jerks of her shoulderblades, just like a poor devil who pushes a heavy handcart. Brrr. . . . Quick, down the stairs, closing the door with a bang, so that the windows rattle in the freezing night.

Upstairs. There she sat, in the middle of the floor, beaten by the cold, terrifying in the light, the two front paws close together on the floor. She sat straight up at the border of the shadow thrown by the canvas on the easel.

Was that my cat, my sweet little cat? No, no, that was a strange animal, gone to seed. Where were her round eyes, her round, childlike eyes, where her beautiful fur with its shimmering markings, where her proud tail, and where the lovely velvet of her ears? No, damn it, that was a strange beast. That one no longer looked straight, but askance; those were the timorous eyes of a pitiful human being transplanted into a strange environment. This one had a sick look, not that of my little fellow . . . damn it.

Miaow! . . . what a distant sound. . . . It came from outside still, from the street; and I had seen already that little mouth inside was no longer red but blue-white, night-white, winter-white, winter-white, dead-white. . . . Miaow! . . . "Cut it out, animal. Cut it out, or I'll kick you out!" . . . in my chair and reasoning with it: "Where have you been? where have you been hiding for such a long time, eh? . . .

"Aren't you hungry? For three days there was your meat and bread and milk. Where have you been in the cold, miserable animal?

"Come here, then. Are you cold—there is the stove. Don't you want to come?"

Then I went to pick her up and put her on my knee. She

weighed almost nothing. She was nothing but cold skin, with a miserable living head attached to it, her fur felt stiff and cold . . . the soft fur under her belly stuck together and was frozen in little tufts. How quiet she was, so quiet! how large was the night and the cold everywhere. . . .

Softly I let my hand slide over the fur of my little animal, and then a great sorrow started welling up in my eyes.

"Come on, Louis, please stand still."

"Yes, Mynheer Ko," he said submissively.

And for a little while it was again quiet in my studio. Under the light which came through the skylight, facing me, the boy posed, with his hands in his pockets, staring straight ahead. Just as I had seen him standing in front of the door of the house, a pedlar of lampglass-wipers and brazier-trays, and immediately struck by his handsome, outdoor appearance, I had persuaded him to earn some money as a model. That had gone on for some time, he was an inexpensive model; but it did not work out.

He was standing there now. With a lazy jerk, without taking his hands out of his pockets, he hoisted up his pants, which hung from his hips by a string. He looked out of the corner of his blue eyes, without effort, out of the window, at the broad sky, into the white glowing sun, where the dry snowflakes passed the window like loose little bits of fluff, which seemed to come from nowhere.

"No, Louis," said I.

The boy looked at my work in the attic, and a cleverly innocent smile split open the red of his sensuous boy's mouth as his cheeks puffed out; but before I really looked up he had contrived to make the smile vanish with a motion of his lips as if he were sucking it in and was again sweetly looking straight ahead. I had already known for a long time that the ragamuffin was laughing at me. In his moods of dissolute indifference he had already told me many times that he thought it was foolish on my part to take so much pains with his mug.

But again his eyes looked around for distraction and he said: "She's in a bad way, ain't she?"

He was speaking of the cat, who sat huddled on the pillows of the reed chair under the window. Yesterday she had been restless all day and had dragged her spoiled stomach and her sick body around in the attic; but now she stayed quiet, she would neither eat nor drink; she was dozing without sleeping and she made herself very small, sometimes following my movements with listless eyes.

"Too bad, she is such a nice little animal."

The villain. But a moment ago he had told me that I ought to beat her to death; he would do it, he knew where he could sell her fur for fifteen stuivers.

"Come, Puss, yawn for me," he said suddenly making a motion, and with the yellow brush of his lamp wiper he began to tickle the animal's nose.

She moved dumbly back, afraid of the contrivance.

"Cut it out, will you!"

He broke out in short, cruel guffaws. He had fallen forward from delight, the curly fair head with its greasy fur cap going down as he burst into uncontrollable laughter, holding his stomach with both hands beneath the blue surface of his almost unwrinkled vest. "I got to laugh when you get mad," he said, when it was finally over. "Still it is too bad, such a nice animal."

"Only the day before yesterday I caught two cats," the boy said, spitting out the words. "I stepped on one's head; they can't bear that."

"No?"

"No, you see, first I threw a stone at them; this one walking around in our yard, near my brother-in-law's car, you see, and he started to go around in circles; well I ran up to him, and there, with my heel on his head. Like this, you see. . . . Well, that way he was out of his misery. What do you say to that?"

His neck had become swollen as he was telling this; his voice had become increasingly moist, as if water were running to the front of his mouth; when he ground his heel he stamped on the ground on the imaginary cat; a flicker of the white of his eye had glowed fiercely, but slowly his eyelids came down again, the arrogant look had disappeared and he stood there again contrite, his head cocked sentimentally sideways.

And when his voice stopped it was again the quiet of a working atmosphere. Outside, underneath the window, the children were tripping by, school was over. I heard their busy squabbles, their excitement in the slowly falling snow. There a boy came running as he shouted; in the back of my laboring brain I heard the fresh noises, the jubilant sound, the high laughter of young innocents. I continued working frantically, struggling to catch the boy's vanishing expression, which had escaped me day after day, which returned and disappeared in his mobile face. Underneath, in the stone masons' place, came blows, the dull report of hammers as they crushed the stone.

What a queerly shaped nose—and it looked as if this vagabond

had a hundred mouths; yet a while ago his neck was as slender as a boy's neck and now it was a maw that he filled, a pocket that he stuffed with his bubbling bad inclinations.

But in his sloppy-looking old clothes, spindly legs stuck into threadbare trousers, and too lazy to take his hands out of his pockets, he walked away from his position without saying a word, dragging his feet, and sank down on the small rush-bottomed chair that I had placed for him when he needed a rest.

"You get such a pain in your back from standing up," he said.

"Nonsense. You probably drank too much gin again last night, your head is as red this morning as a red cabbage."

"Oh no, I'm off the stuff."

He sat with his elbows resting on his knees, playing with his fur cap as with a dead animal, quite bent over, heavy, foursquare, like a load on the floor. Thus he let me look at his vicious back, which stuck out under the pile of old clothes that poor people wear to protect themselves from the cold. Under the flood of light this back was like a surface of stubbornness, a tough sounding-board, from which all decent thought would recoil and be beaten to smithereens. There was something so terribly bestial about the preponderance of this rounded back, something so low and down-to-earth about this submissively bent, slave body. How was it possible that in this piece of uncouthness I had every once in a while seen the freshness of an outdoor child, the unconcern of a tramp who goes wherever the spirit impels him?

That is the way I had looked at him and that was how I had started on him, with his roving appearance, tame like a wild summer bird during a difficult winter; but when the money had come regularly, all that had disappeared; he began to come in the morning dragging his feet, yearning for more money, bloated, the dissipations of the night before shining in his eyes, with the guzzling still swelling his cheeks and throat. Should I send him for a while again into the fields? But how should I get hold of him again? He lived with his mother in a caravan, and three times a day he spoke about becoming a soldier or a sailor or something else again. To get away, far away, because here it was misery.

Still he sat in front of me, as I laid my palette away, my cat with collapsed back, with shanks and shoulderblades sticking out from under the skin, in one sad bunch on the muslin chair cushion. She sat on her paws, hidden under the fur, and her tail curled around her as if to protect her from the cold. And she was so quiet, one was hardly aware that she was there, the small head

with the pale bloodless nose motionless; and the ears pointing up, dry and withered at the edges, without the slightest motion. She was mortally sick; it was only from behind her half-closed eyes that the fever of life burned and shimmered darkly. I had made her a little resting-place near the stove, thinking that she was cold, but with hesitating steps and mewing sadly she had run away from the heat and had returned to the freshness of the window. Then I had left her to her fate, one can't continuously be preoccupied by a sick cat.

"No! I won't have any more of it!" the boy spat out with his face directed toward the floor.

He sat there, fussing with black, dirty fingers at the small mourning ribbon fastened to the side of his cap, then he lifted his arms, first one and then the other.

"I can stand it all right, you see, but twenty drinks ain't right; don't you think?"

"You rather than I."

"What?" he boasted, sitting up straight again, "Jan's brother drinks at least thirty of them."

"Who is Jan?"

"Why, Jan, he is the boss of the dance hall, you know, where I sometimes play."

"Oh, yes."

"A good fellow that Bram, he cares a lot for me, but he has had two strokes; did you ever hear about it, mynheer, the flame shot out of his throat, on account of the heat inside, of the burning gin."

The skin under his eyes started to tremble and the words came out of his mouth softly and scaredly, when he repeated once more: "No, I won't take any more of it. . . ."

But as his fear quickly subsided, he changed the position of his skinny legs and prattled on: "Oh, we've had a good time together, because he's a good fellow. He likes me. They all like me. Do you know why that is?"—"No? Well you see, that is because I am always cheerful. You see, I'm always cheerful. I make my mother laugh, see? Lately when my father, blessed be his memory, died, I still made her laugh. She said to me, 'Louis, don't you want to say good-by to your father for the last time . . .' and she was crying something awful. . . . I said, 'Yes, mother . . .' and then I went to his bed in her caravan . . . see . . . and I said, 'Well, so long, Pop, hope you make out all right.' Then my mother started to laugh. Hey man, she laughed so hard . . . I thought she'd laugh the old boy back to life. See, that's why they all like me."

I had been sitting patiently next to him, allowing him to indulge in loquaciousness. He was like that on those days after the dissipated nights, such as the night before. He always went on in this way, to get away from work. And he had a knack for telling stories that he could sometimes make me listen to the echoes of his dissolute life. From his untutored brain sometimes sprang yarns that made me forget my studies and my work.

He would tell me how he would leave as soon as the cold weather had passed, with his wagon, his habitation on wheels, and his mother, whom he called *"kokkerol"*, his father *"sterestan"*, and his foal, going from fair to fair, living in the open air, under the big sun. He could tell me about the camping along the paved roads, with his little horse grazing at the border of a canal and he would imitate the "ho-o-o-ho" of the skippers of the barges. He would tell me how during hot summer days full of stolen strawberries he would spend the sultry, misty nights laden with the smell of new-mown hay. And he liked to boast about his fights with boys, and the fights of the grown-up men, emphasizing those which had been the bloodiest and most magnificent. Sometimes his stories were a bit too bold and they were filled with cries for help, shouts in the night of the wooden traveling coaches, coming from under the lowered sails of the field tents and from beneath the protecting coverings of the merry-go-rounds, where in the early morning men with hair rumpled from the night chased each other with knives, seeking to strike and to kill each other in the morning darkness, between the wooden horses and between the stiff swinging of the yellow painted carrousel lions. And he knew how to tell!—and he loved to do it!—of closely observed bacchanalia, of groups of people with coats off. Then he came to life; then he started to step out and did things with his arms; with a jerk he would cock his cap and, looking at me with enlarged eyes, he would shout: "Look, this way!" How he would stride through the red smoking night of the fair, in the wild excitement of music coming from all around him, in the greasy smell of cheap doughnuts!—everywhere the air was full of it!—in a jolly crowd possessed by freedom and gin as he himself; sawing on his concertina, he would send forth his high boy's voice into space, singing: "Oh, what a girl, what a beautiful, lovely girl!" Then I saw him again, as he jumped up and there rose out of his flattened, gin-filled head, out of his winter sleep, his total youth, sometimes springing like a flash from a struck tinder, sometimes in the broadness of his flaming imagination, all around him, coming before the slobbering gait; and there was something unusual,

something fresh in his filthy voice, when he then sank again onto the stool and uttered his great desire for the spacious summer: "I wish it was spring again."

But when, as now, he began to tell about his wanderings, of his wild nights and his pickpocket stories from the city, then often there came between his gin-scented tales of thievery, like a stake sticking out from the ground, his deep fear of police; then he became embarrassed, dumb, with his mouth still talking, as if a fist had grabbed him from behind the neck, and would shut up to start again stutteringly, lying so much he convinced himself of it.

He did not even know what lying was; he lied from habit and because he liked to lie; like an artist in the midst of his material, he often stood surrounded by his lies. Then he got caught in his own stories, and before it was over he would have belied himself a dozen times. Then I would pretend that I believed every word of it, that was the best for my work, and he would not feel it but would drool on, carried along by his fantasy. But sometimes I could not withstand the temptation and told him how he lied. Then he became shortspoken and surly or he would laugh right to my face or, most often, strike a sentimental pose, cock his head, begin to complain, uttering hypocrisies, phrasing his biggest lie, the lie of his whole race and kind: "What can a fellow do to earn his bread; what can you say about it?"

The rest period had lasted long enough, and I said: "Do you feel like working?"

"Yes, mynheer." But he remained seated.

"No, stand up. If you do it well I shall give you a cigar."

"Come on, two, then I still got one for tonight."

"Two then."

"I believe that there are few boys that are as well off with you as I am."

"Come on, stand there now."

"You are a nice gentleman."

He got up, with a jerk, as if he were seized by a sudden hacking cough, a short laughter, stood up in his full length and shuffled ahead lazily.

The work was resumed while the boy was yawning loudly, his wide-open yaw turned toward me; this enabled me to look into his mouth with its short, cruel teeth, like the maw of an ape, palely red inside. The opening closed.

"It is a pleasure."

After the struggle, my strength for work returned, life again

possessed me, the life-giving power, only the great urge to accomplish deeds.

"Look, look, she wants to get down. Can you do it, puss?" the boy mocked. "Shall I give you a lift from behind."

The cat had gotten up and tried carefully to get down from the cushion, her body stiffly bent forward, her tail slack behind her; did her instinct tell her that tomorrow she would not be able to get down any more? She hesitated, felt with her paws beneath her and so let herself finally go. The claws hooked themselves into the cushion of the chair to break the fall, but she fell softly to the floor; noiselessly she immediately took some steps, but she did not totter, her paws were clawing the floor.

Like a somnambulist, who neither sees nor hears, but walks straight ahead in the security of its dream visions, she went, moving along the floor, between the boy and myself, under my eyes, along by the easel, and made straight for the door.

"She wants to go out," he said.

"No, she is looking for air."

She was already at the door. There stood these two painting boxes made of wooden boards like the coffins of poor people, rough and unpainted. They stood against the wall, with loose covers, leaning against each other. She shoved herself in between them, through the open space until only her tail remained outside, then it also disappeared. Then for a moment her head appeared again, she had turned around, as a cat will do in its basket.

"Leave her alone," I said to the boy.

"Sure, such a nice little animal; it's a pity."

I put a small saucer with water in front of the opening between the boxes, the ill are always thirsty,—but then I went to work again, one cannot busy oneself for ever with a sick cat.

Outside beyond the window the snow had again started whirling, criss-cross, the white flakes floating up and down and the pale shimmering started to spread a shadow in the attic, veiling the window, like a curtain of thin gauze before the light-shy eyes of one mortally ill.

For two days she remained there sitting in the dark, without movement, without a complaint, dying in a corner of her own choosing. I often went to see her, though I knew it would always be the same; the slight hope, the sickly sheen of her fur in the corner between the boxes and mournful expression of her inward-turned eyes, which bore witness to her silent suffering.

Once more, on the third day of her illness, I had disturbed her and taken her up, placing my hand gently under her breast and had put her near the window in her old habitual place. A kind woman neighbor had come to have a look and had shaken her head under the black woolen winter cap; she was of the opinion that perhaps it was the teeth. So many cats and children died from them. She talked about nature, which had to run its course, because one did not know what to do about an animal under such circumstances. But a little later, when she had gone, the cat had gotten up and tried to get down from the cushion, but that she could do no longer, so I had had to lift her down to the ground, very carefully, afraid that I might hurt her. Immediately she started to walk, but with small shaky steps, and stubbornly crawled back to the space between the boxes, huddled together in the corner where she would die, her smallness shut off from her surroundings, but without a complaint, like a strong man who only silently protests against his suffering.

Outside the snow obliterated all noise and the steps of the passers-by had become inaudible. It was Sunday, the fourth day of her illness. When I came downstairs I saw the path, disappearing between the trees and the little houses, with the glistening traces of the soles of the shoes and the wagon wheels, because it was still freezing. There was nobody in the neighborhood; from the further end of the path a peasant woman came tripping along smoothing her Sunday clothes, in her hand the missal with its golden lock. The house gables were covered with snow, and smoke from the dark chimney pots was faintly blue in the warmly white air, still packed with snow. Broadly the land stretched out behind the black picket fence, it bulged away under the new blanket of snow in the white, wintry silence of Sunday. From beside the Amstel one could hear occasionally the clanging of an approaching tram; it came, the pure ringing of the bell into a space, empty of noise, like the sounding of the priest's bell as in a Catholic country he advances bringing the last sacrament to a dying person.

In my home it was still too, still because of the snow, still through the Sunday loneliness of the house, and from my window I looked upon the light blanket, the pall covering a bier.

But toward the night of this silent day, when I again went to see how she was getting along, she had crawled out of her hiding place, her head above the saucer of water. Was she thirsty? I took the saucer up to her, but there was no more any desire in her small body. Was it because it was cool that she huddled that way

over the cold water? Was there a deathly fever in her head? What could a large, uncouth man do in his love for such a small object? Perhaps a saucer with snow would be even more refreshing. I went downstairs and scooped up some fresh snow in the stone container. Then I extinguished the stove and left her alone in the cold of the work room.

But the next day the path was a pool; it had stopped freezing; the melted snow leaked and ran around my house, water streamed into small holes in the mess of snow and mud and made grooves between the yellow cobblestones. And inside there were the sucking and sighing noises of the released cold, and on the roof and in the trees there was a springlike life as if there were many cats there. But with a dull noise, with the muffled drop of a shovelful of earth upon a coffin, the clumps of snow slid down the roof and fell onto the ground. There was an air of decomposition and transition about, the tepid odor of a vanishing beauty of winter, the smell of thaw and of rotting and melting ice. The moist light cast a sad reflection inside the house, bluish like the haze around the eyes of a dying man, encompassing the room with its feeble shimmer.

The cat was still alive: she sat huddled in her corner between the boxes, without a peep coming, her head held low, the eyes staring emptily ahead, in mad fear of death, above the saucer full of melted snow.

It was already noon when the boy rang the bell. Breathing life, he said that he had not been able to come earlier, he had had to register with the Army. The water from the thawing snow seeped out of the ragged legs of his trousers as he mounted the stairs behind me; he carried along the mud from his wandering through the streets, everywhere he set his shuffling feet. He swung inside, hands in his pockets as usual, closed the door with a shove of his elbow and shouted at once, seeing me near the boxes: "My goodness, she's still alive; my, ain't she a tough one!"

His fair head swung on his shoulders. He was wearing a new cap, cocked over his right ear. It was a sailor's cap with a shiny visor and a patent leather storm band to which were fastened two copper buttons upon which gleamed two yellow anchors. His tie was new, too, and not fastened like a string around his neck, but tied with loving care into a sailor's knot under his Adam's apple.

He made himself at home and immediately fell down into the small chair.

"Where's your cap?"

"Here."

Like an old skin, and folded fourfold, the thing came out of his pocket. "I ran fast," he started to lie as he hiccoughed, "because it was late; we had a lot of fun, there were at least twenty of us boys . . . eh . . . but those gentlemen have always time on their hands, they made me wait for a long time, well . . . about three hours. They had to verify my records, where I was born, see? Now I know . . . my old lady never wanted to tell me, see . . . but now I know . . . the twenty-seventh of May of the year seventy-one. . . . Do you know my age now? . . . No? . . . Eighteen . . . the gentlemen told me, from the year seventy-one . . . a nice age . . . if the old lady would give her consent, then I'd ship out, to the East . . . but twice they hauled me back . . . my mother always tells them . . . once I was as far as Harderwyk, I can't do anything any more today, what do you say to that? . . . But I'll be rejected, I have a broken blood vessel in my eye . . . here in my right one."

That promised something. The bumming around in the morning, the playing at being heroes of a troop of wild boys, all brave because they had enlisted in the armed forces, the boasting among themselves about the East and the sea and the fine uniforms, the treating all around, always "just one more," the noisy pilgrimage from one gin-mill to another, had loosened him from the grip of winter and had awakened him. He was irresistible that afternoon. Like the foam on the lips of one possessed, life bubbled over his lips; it shone from his eyes, it foamed in his mouth, it lived in his released arms and legs; with his hands, no longer inactive, he made gestures in the air accompanying his vague visions.

And in his puffed-up boasting, in the realization of his own valor he had started to chew tobacco. . . . "A man must be able to chew tobacco, what do you say to that? . . . If you no longer take a drink . . . otherwise he isn't a man. . . ." There he stood, chewing or shoving the hot wad back and forth in his mouth; there was dirty filling-out of the cheeks around the nostrils, because the superfluous juice bothered him and his mouth was running. Then he would leave his place, realizing that it was not nice to spit on a gentleman's floor. He expectorated between his teeth, and the spittle landed hissing in the coal-box, or sometimes, when he did not dare leave his place, he swallowed it with a grimace as his hot throat protested and the bitter juice went down.

In this way the afternoon went by. There was no longer any question of working. I went from time to time to the boxes to find out whether she had yet died. His boisterousness went over my head, my thoughts were not of him.

So he did as he pleased. With his instinct of a wild beast he felt he was the boss again, the few times that I forbade him to continue, he smiled slyly or posed sentimentally. But then his joy again reverberated through the attic and his noisy, gay voice rambled on; he brought forth all his knowledge and tricks, bragging about what he was going to experience in order to attract my attention and to escape work and the necessity for standing still.

He turned the burning end of a cigar butt inside his mouth with his lips and smoked with the fire inside his mouth, and then he flipped it out again with his wet lips, pulled and puffed with a sucking-in of his hollow, elastic cheeks and made the wet and half-extinguished butt flare up again in a red glow. He bit a penny in half, chewing and twisting the copper between the vise of his cruel teeth. He crushed a piece of coal from the stove into fine bits with his teeth, and the black liquid drooled from the corners of his mouth. Oh, there were many other tricks he had up his sleeve. . . . He began to walk on his hands around the attic, with his fingers close together, and hands flat on the floor like a monkey, his legs bent at the knee in the air, his dirty coat hanging about head and hands. After that he took a piece of paper—"there's enough paper around"—and folded it into at least fifty strips, slowly, patiently, as if it were something important and had to be done very precisely, and then started—"Look now,"—and turned it and twisted it, unfolded it and closed it up again, wrinkled it and folded it in all kinds of figures like a full-fledged prestidigitator. In a tedious, whiny voice he began to recite his lesson, immediately falling back in the right tone: "That's for a start, ladies and gentlemen, a little mouth organ music," he drawled and sang with his voice, as if he were at a fair, as if he were standing in the center of the marketplace in the midst of a group of onlookers, or before a fashionable house, surrounded by many children on a wide street. Figure after figure he fashioned from the paper, things which bore some resemblance to the objects they were supposed to represent. "That's a flight of steps for getting upstairs; now I turn it around, and it's a church window . . . and that's a cockade the postilions wear on their hats and that's an emblazoned star for kings and emperors. That's a fan for keeping cool . . . and that an epaulet the officers wear on

their shoulders. . . . This is a small sentry box and that the wine glass from which gentlemen like to drink champagne . . . and that a sofa and that the foot rest and that a child's cradle. Shoo . . . shoo . . ."

The stiff paper rattled between his fingers, fumbling and fiddling, pinching and stretching it: "See, the paper is too stiff, I want to make an elephant. . . ." He developed it with much working of his arms and twisting with his fingers, a little untrained in his virtuosity, and made his series of paper likenesses. He let joints of his fingers crack and snap, as with one movement and a lot of hocus-pocus he allowed one finger to produce another, to the delight of the crowd, he imagined around him. The session was nearly over . . . he had reached the letter K, a Spanish cellar became a pulpit with steps . . . then the paddlewheels of a steamer that goes through the water. . . . "That's a summer house," he sang, "and the cap my grandmother wore, blessed be her memory, and if she isn't in heaven she's at least out of the way . . . and that's a spittoon . . . and that a cooper's plane . . . this is a coach lantern . . . and that, ladies and gentlemen, is an English salt cellar and if you now will all be kind enough to give a small contribution I'll have something too."

The folded and thumbed paper had now become grey under his dirty fingers. It achieved the form of two clumsily shaped containers joining at the ends, which he held in the middle between thumb and index finger. He held the container out to collect, and with his other hand took off his fur cap, holding it at the top, pulling it from his head like a plaster, and made the rounds.

"No, that was just in fun, you see," he said somewhat abashed. "But, you see, now you have learned a lot . . . but I know a lot too. . . . Oh, my dear sir, I know still more tricks . . . and you may have seen much in your life, but this you never saw before . . . now give me a swallow of gasoline."

"What?"

But before I could prevent him from doing it, he had taken the oil can from its place and uncorked it.

"But no, please give me a match. No, don't be afraid, I will do nothing wrong. Open the door, if you want to. . . . Come on, give it to me . . . oh, you are crazy, it's a fine trick."

And then he set the can to his mouth and drank, pursing his lips, a good swallow of the filthy liquid. His eyes laughed triumphantly above his greasy mouth, he turned his face to the door and lit a match. And slowly, still looking around, he lifted his

arm with the burning stick of wood to just above his chin, and then he blew, with a blast of his cheeks, slightly bending his shoulders first forward and then backwards, moistening his lips with the oil, into the still blue and yellow small flame.

Like a sheaf of fire a red sparkling flame, a plume of burning spangles more than a meter in length, flew from his mouth. It looked as if the very fire of life sprang from his gullet; I stood staring at him as my throat constricted and with my heart beating faster from fright. I saw how his wild, merry eyes blinked with pleasure, lit up white in the play of fire above the sparkling gold. He closed his lips as if he were biting off the flame while it went out; his almost distant laugh gurgled in his throat, but around him it was dark for a moment.

But again there was the spray of flaming light, a sheaf of light; as he gulped, his hot breath seemed to have caught fire, and his animal-like nature exploded like a fiery arrow, hissing out his boiling interior.

Had I been mistaken? Didn't I see my cat crawl underneath the column of fire, out of the corner, where she was dying? Hadn't I seen her sinuous darkness swinging her way toward the open outdoors? But the boy continued spitting fire; it flew out of the door as with a last effort of his lungs and cheeks the little red flames, scintillating like fiery butterflies in the light heat which spread like powder in the black smoke rings, winged their way through the opening into the small hallway.

And then . . . the muffled thud, thud, the dull cadence of a weak thing, falling and bumping into things along the wooden staircase.

Flames of death, flames of death . . .

But there was the laughter that started thundering, a crazy laughter, the hard jerks of an explosive laughter. I saw the boy standing on the top step, bent forward over the well of the staircase, holding his belly with his hands, bending and twisting and stamping his feet with insane joy. The blood swelled in his throat and his ears, and he jerked with his head, his eyes were cramped in their sockets; but from his oily lips laughter burst forth his guffaws, it came in spurts and shrieks, raw like the shrill blaring of a triumphant trumpet.

"Oh, oh!" he said between bursts of laughter. "Oh, oh, look, mynheer, she has come to life again, but now she is done for. Look, look, will you . . ."

I looked; she was dead. She lay at the bottom of the stairs, she had come down sideways after her fall, she had tumbled onto

the dirty yellow crossed rushes of the mat below the stairs; she lay flat on her side, dark, with her tail behind her, as if she had stayed dead after her frightened jump.

Again, as if I were discovering it anew, as one will see something for the first time, as I looked down upon her her smallness impressed me, again I perceived how puny and thin she was.

I went down the stairs, I bent down and picked her up from the mat, while at the top of the stairs the terrible laughter of the boy kept falling down upon her and myself. There he stood on the top step as his fits of laughter broke forth spasmodically.

"You had better go now, Louis," I said as he came down the steps. "There is your money."

"Ain't I coming back tomorrow, mynheer?" he said, his moist face still creased with laughter.

"No."

"Or the day after?"

"No."

"Not any more? Perhaps you will call for me?"

He ran out, rattling his money. In the distance on the path I could still hear him remonstrating with the children in his loud boy's voice; but in the house everything was quiet again.

Then I carried her upstairs and silently took a sheet, a clean one from my bed, and laid her out carefully, smoothly on the muslin of the chair cushion.

Thus she lay stiffly stretched out in death, thus I put her down, her tail in the white folds.

I sat down on my camp chair and bent over her, I gazed at her, as she lay there, sunk into the cushion, but not as small as before. There she lay, looking at me with her eyes wide open, full of reproach, from the white mourning cloth of the poor people's shroud.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

Albert Verwey

LEONARD AND JULIAN

AS DAY DAWNED, THE YOUNG BOYS SAT IN THE DAMP, ROCKY CLEFT. The morning before they had left their home on the plain behind the mountains. Playing together they had trotted through

the watery valleys. Searching for stones and plants they had clambered up the rocky slopes. And when the sun was at its height, sheltered among fir trees near a silvery brook they sat down to feast on the fruits they had gathered by the way. The heat over, walking was pleasant enough, but both boys had become quieter and when at dusk they descended on the other side of the mountain and got into the bushes and briars of the ravine, courage failed them, in the darkness, to seek their way out of it again.

All the night, shivering in the damp mist, they leaned against each other, now awake, and now asleep, wishing again and again that the day would come. At last they saw light appearing in the sky above them. The vegetation around them became clearer, still dark but less threatening than when, just a moment before, it had seemed a part of the night. A bird uttered a hoarse cry and flew in an oblique line across the space between the two edges of the cleft.

The younger had jumped up, but his feet pained him and he staggered so that the older boy had to catch him and make him lie down again. He then leaned over and took off the other's shoes and rubbed the soles of feet that were both cold and swollen. So occupied, his blond head with round, blue eyes, anxious and kind, was held close to the pale features of the dark child who painfully smiled up at him.

They were obviously brothers, both clad in jacket and cap of the same black velvet. Lost in the mountain woods there was nothing about them that did not appear strange, for one would have imagined them, with bow and arrow, crossing the courtyard to go and shoot at birds in the park, or running up the stairs and through the rooms of a castle in pursuit of a ball that had flown in through some window and rolled underneath a heavy old chest. Parents would certainly inquire for them, and a grumbling steward or huntsman keep an eye on them.

But it was not so. Their parents were dead, the faithful servants dismissed; and over the castle, now deserted, there ruled only the truculent relative who had come from the city and said that he would take the children with him.

The world of childhood had closed behind them, and of the other, the great world beyond, they knew only that it lay open. They had made no plan, for youth's plan lies always in its inner certainty; and only now, with the feet of little Julian before him, Leonard thought of the possibility of going on again.

Of the impossibility he did not think, only of the means. He

encouraged his brother and supported him when he stood up again.

The ravine was now all light. There was an opening toward the south where the sun shone on the rocks and bushes. The way was not steep but rough and barren so that the journey for both, now that they were hungry, and thirsty, became the more difficult the longer it continued.

"Leave me alone, Leonard," said Julian, "and go to see if there is any water yonder."

However unwillingly, Leonard left him. He quickly reached the height and, between the branches of the fir-trees, he saw wood piled up in the distance. A man smoking a pipe was carrying tools toward a clearing. Nearby stood a cart, with a brown horse moping before it.

The world was now altogether different—not alarming and hurtful, but sociable and friendly, so that Leonard did not think at once of his brother but of the landscape. He let his eyes wander about and then walked slowly up to the man. Sometimes hidden behind the trees, then visible again in sunny openings, he went on, but the man did not notice him until he was close by. He appeared astonished when he saw the handsome boy and heard the tale of being lost and of a younger brother who had been left some distance back and who was thirsty.

The wagoner gave him at first no answer, but pulled a tin flask out from under the seat of his wagon and said: "I will come with you." They departed together and, when they approached the cleft, Leonard hurried ahead. He came to the spot where he had left Julian but did not see him. He looked about in dismay, then deeper into the ravine and upward on the mountain, but there was nowhere a trace of Julian. The wagoner had now approached also. He understood that the child had disappeared. He saw the anxiety in Leonard's face and helped him search here and there in the brushwood and clefts; and the boy's treble and the man's heavy voice called out so that the sound reverberated and echoed from the mountainside. But neither search nor shouts availed. Exhausted, Leonard had to return with the man, who gave him food and drink and promised to take him along in his cart to the nearest village.

They followed a hilly path between the tall fir-trees. With the leafy tip of a long switch the wagoner tapped the flies from the horse that jogged along in his harness and only occasionally shook his head impatiently. Now and then the man asked a question: who were Leonard's parents, where was his house, where were his

relatives and what was the name of the place he had come from. The boy talked vaguely about the death of his parents, the sale of his house, of having no relatives and of coming from a region that lay far behind the mountains.

The shadows were already lengthening when they rode out of the woods. The road sloped steeply so that the brakes ground at every turn and the horse's bells tinkled harder. On one side the view was cut off by the mountain growth; on the other, the land lay in broad and deep undulations. It was late haying time, and little women with colorful kerchiefs on their heads hurried up the hills with amazing strides and with such huge bundles of hay on their backs that they could scarcely be recognized. Down below, still invisible because it was huddled against the side of the mountain, lay the village. At the end of the road the cart, with one turn, clattered in.

The wagoner jumped down and led the horse by the rein amid cackling hens, dabbling children and low houses over a plank bridge that crossed a half-dry brook. Curious women made for their doors and stared at the blond boy in black velvet who sat alone in the cart and thus made his entrance.

There was silence in one yard where lay filthy straw. Before the stable door stood a tall, broad-shouldered man who was something between a farmer and an alderman. The wagoner, in his bushy beard and blue smock, talked with him while the other kept his eyes fixed upon the boy. He nodded approvingly, beckoned the boy to come down from the cart and told him to follow. He entered a house that stood next to the barn and that was half shop, half inn.

Within, the room was much larger than it seemed from the outside. There were two counters, behind one of them stood the buffet, behind the other, shelves of merchandise, and in front stood casks of provisions, a side of bacon, a barrel of meal, wooden shoes and straw brooms. Through an adjoining passage the man called: "Maria!"; a good-natured, fat creature in a black skirt and purple jacket appeared and was ordered to give the boy something to eat. She looked startled, shook her head and disappeared, to return soon with a supper of beans and boiled beef. In the meanwhile the man had drawn a small glass of beer, which he set before the boy on a little table near the window.

The boy ate and drank sleepily. Then his host led him up to a little room at the top of the house overlooking the stable; there was a bed, and the man told the boy that he ought to have a good sleep.

The following morning, when he awoke, his black clothes had disappeared, and in their place a suit of gray bombazine lay on the chair. It looked comparatively new and fitted him rather loosely. He was now a fair, sturdy youngster and as he went down the stairs he himself realized that he would be worth his keep.

The proprietor of the house—who was waiting for him in the taproom—was in fact everything that a man could be in the village: burgomaster, alderman and town-clerk, farmer, merchant and miller. He looked over his new acquisition and remarked that the boy could work, first in the storeroom that was behind the house and also had an entrance to the stable, and later, perhaps, in the mill, where there was an old workman who was ill and would probably not recover.

Leonard then worked in the storehouse, where he received goods from the carters or handed it to them, or brought it into the shop, arranged and listed it. At times he still felt the loss of his brother Julian as a void, and the thought of where his brother might have strayed could suddenly constrict his throat; but, most of the time he thought only of his work, which had to be done and was at no single moment wholly finished. And gradually he also became one whom people knew in relation to his work; about his origin little was asked. From the wagoner's story they knew that he was without relatives and that he did not come from the neighborhood. Nor did it seem to the patron's advantage that the authorities—which were himself—should make a search for the boy's family. He was loved for his own sake, by Maria, the old housekeeper, as well as by the carters, the women and the children and the people of the district who dealt in the shop.

When, after some time, the old workman died, and Leonard was given the place in the mill, he was known to them all, and no one ever spoke any more of the unusual way he had made his entrance into the village.

The mill was behind the settlement where a stream, which did not dry up even in summer, kept the gigantic paddle-wheel in motion. In that damp, out-of-the-way place, where some broad-leaved trees gave a luxurious shade, Leonard had a comfortable little job. He attached the wheel or unfastened it, he attended to the sluice that could wholly or partly dam up the water and he saw to the necessary repairs—for the rest of the time, he received the grain that was thrown into the hopper and put the meal into the sacks that were loaded on wagons and taken to the shop or, more often, to the town.

In the clatter of the wheel and flying dust of the grain, gentle and powdered white, he became the miller, in that position respected far and wide.

His patron was content, the villagers liked him, the children going to school in the neighboring hamlet always stopped a while to listen to the water and the clattering of the wheel at which they threw pebbles. They paid no attention to him, convinced as they were that he would do them no harm. And every other Sunday he went to listen to the Minister of a little church a good hour further away, and he recognized many a farmer there whom he had seen passing by or whose meal he had ground.

Sometimes he went also to the town. Not toward that side of the mountain where he had lost Julian, but to the opposite side, and the trips there were his only journeys of importance. He went with the wagon laden with sacks of meal, which he carried to the baker on the neatly cobbled town square. And he stopped at the large inn where townspeople and strangers spent their money, at the same time doing business.

He never thought of his youth, only of the years that he had passed in the village where he had become a young man.

Julian, left behind in the ravine, was soon in a condition of stupor from thirst and pain. Thus he was found by the Graybeard of the Mountain, who, by paths known only to himself, took him to his dwelling.

The Graybeard lived in a wondrous mountain world. Closed in on all sides by high walls, it was none the less accessible from all sides. But it seemed that everyone who approached the path from the outside, which was clearly to be seen from within, was struck with blindness. In the center stood the House, hewn from rock, with open galleries overlooking a mass of fantastic crags on which red flowers climbed. There he carried the child, laid him on a restful bed and gave him into the care of little Monica.

She was, in fact, a very young girl, who called him grandfather. She played with and cared for the boy, that was all.

Julian lay in a raving fever that lasted ten days. When he recovered he found before him a life of the greatest simplicity and yet full of wonders. His physical life consisted of meals with the Graybeard and Monica—the servitors were numerous and yet seemed to be absent because nothing of their activity penetrated to the mind—of clothing that remained the same although it was constantly changed. But more than that there was life itself, as Julian became conscious of it. He thought of Leonard, thought

of him with all natural feeling, with sorrow for his loss, with melancholy remembrance of his kindness, with loving perception of every small detail of their years of childhood companionship, and their flight of a day—but all these feelings and images were like fish in a stream, freely coming and going, but enveloped in a gleaming, moving, penetrable light from which it was both better and desirable not to separate them.

Julian had forgotten nothing; on the contrary everything lived in him more vividly than he had ever known it, but at the same time he knew, as if by some secret prompting, that it would never move him to action, never bring him back to the actuality from which it sprang.

And just as the past lived within him, the present lived outside him: the Graybeard whom he accepted as a model and to whose words he daily listened, the little girl with whom he ran and played, the whole wonder-filled world of the mountain in which he came to be at home and which let him know its secrets ever more clearly. Inside the house and without, there was order in all natural things: as unchangeable a regularity of meal-times as of seasons, yet in this regularity there was a sensation that he could interpret in no other words than that there was no time. He was captivated from hour to hour, finally from year to year, but when he had lived long enough to recall himself, to wish to recall himself, then he discovered that nothing, absolutely nothing, had happened and that nevertheless the same enthralling fullness still existed. But it existed—and this he now understood—as the stream of his own consciousness. He grasped at every instant the whole living mass of drops which the completeness of life mirrored for him, lost and then gave back again. He felt submerged in a life so fervent and so real that he retained nothing of the casual.

An indefinite sadness developed in him, which he had never before experienced. He had grown older—how much older he did not know. He had once, bathing with Monica in the clear mountain pool with the dark woods standing above them, looked down at his feet and perceived how high above the water his head remained. He had called to her to see how tall he was. He had looked at her, too, as she stooped on the borderline of sunlight and shadow and with a movement of her head tossed back her long, golden hair.

Noticing the curve of her shoulders had released in him one of the great emotions of his life, that of an indescribable grace. Henceforth all that was most moving existed for him in that

curve of her shoulders. The dark firs and the blue sky were merely background for that whiteness, to bring it out and illuminate it.

But in that emotion lay a secret that he could not discover in Monica. Nature that surrounded him possessed it neither. The words of the Graybeard, however weighty, lacked it too. In Monica's voice it never reached expression.

He became restless and wandered on the borders of his mountain world. One warm afternoon he lay outstretched behind a thorn bush, with his eyes fixed on the stark blue of the summer sky. Suddenly he heard soft warm sounds, as of clucking. Through an opening in the thorn he saw a young woman, on the edge of a dusty road, suckling a child at the full breast that swelled from her open kerchief. A young fellow lay looking on. He was a tinker, sunburnt and with unruly, curly hair. She was coarse, red and friendly. The color of health and long roads was upon them both. Their eyes beamed as they regarded the child.

Julian remained watching until the woman, who had closed her dress, had fastened the child over her shoulders in a cloth, the man had gathered his tools and they had stood up.

He turned homeward, something less than before and yet greater. He felt slave to the idea that he was richer. The following morning saw him on one of the roads that led to the outside world, an ordinary bachelor in search of the happiness of all men. The world that he came into again was then as it is now and as it always will be. It consisted of the orderly elements, that is, of those who willingly or unwillingly allow themselves to become co-workers with others and of the disorderly, those for whom co-working is impossible. The marvel was that those who called themselves the co-workers had the sword always in hand, contended with each other, and did their work in a state of self-created confusion. The disorderly, on the other hand, were the defenseless, those who had no swords, the peaceful who would gladly have wished to work together but who thought they could not do so otherwise than peaceably.

When Julian had walked half a day he came to a farm. He was hungry and asked a laborer, who on a ladder was driving nails into the cornice of the roof, if there might be work for him. The laborer pointed ot a farmer who, fat and red, was standing near a cesspool. When Julian had repeated his request, he was asked what wages he demanded. "I demand no wage," he answered: "I am hungry." The other gave a short, hard laugh and said: "Good;

then I'll discharge the useless eater: he gets high wages and does little."

Julian went away, for he did not want to deprive the laborer of his bread.

He walked through a town where there were benches in a park on the square. There he dropped down to rest. But a helmeted man came and ordered him away. He complained that he was tired and had walked the whole day. But the warder of the peace became impatient and said sharply: "The bench is not for tramps." At that moment two dandies, who were discussing the light women of the town, approached and, still chatting, settled themselves on the bench and poked the sand with their walking-sticks.

Outside the town Julian found an inn where a marriage was being held. The host smiled, taking him in his velvet suit for a showman, a runner, unhooked a fiddle from the wall and told him to play. That he could do, and when he had eaten and drunk and arranged for a night's lodging he played the merriest dance music for the farmers and farm girls who stamped and clumped on the floor. That evening when the lights were already smoking, two of the farmers drew their knives, and their wives took themselves off with two others to hide in the hay.

The next morning the host made him a present of a large, gray cloak. Clad in this he succeeded in getting a place as runner for the bank that had its granite front with bulging, square, latticed windows on the main street. With his first pay he bought himself other clothing. He ran to and from the various offices of the town and showed himself to all inhabitants who did business with the bank. In the bank itself he appeared only to receive orders or to report. But when he had worked for a year he was called before his employer who proposed that he become a clerk. He accepted the offer and from now on sat on a high stool before a wooden desk with a list of quotations at hand, figuring the prices of stocks and the coupon-interest. He sat there with several other clerks and a bookkeeper. The time was passed mostly in figuring. It was always done by more than one clerk, so that the chance of error would be as small as possible. Letters were written, also, for which the rough draft was given by their employer who sat in the more handsomely furnished front office. Once written, they had to be copied on the press by the youngest clerk. When the employer, smoothing over his narrow, shining cranium with his fine, beringed hand and blinking his eyes, called: "Mister, down here!" the bookkeeper propped his pen attentively on the rim of his

desk, whipped off his stool and appeared before his master, who issued exact questions from his fair beard or gave temperate orders.

A wind of activity swept through the office at that time and at the Bourse hour, too, when both employer and bookkeeper disappeared and there was more chance for young townfolks' chatter.

But the liveliest excitement was caused by the calls made at the bank. Julian had long ago noted how wide was the circle in which the bank did business. Not only the business of town and province stood on their accounts or had shares of their stock from which their own enterprises were fed—as those of certain persons who, indeed, would have seen no chance to collect interest on the national debt, to bring about a purchase or sale or even to find opportunity to place investments in mortgages—not only were the people of the town and province dependent on the bank, but, as a result of connections with other banks, so was the whole kingdom and, in still wider relations, a good part of the world.

And Julian observed again that the apparent cooperation was a mask for war. Seemingly the bank was intended to make easier the lives and affairs of the people who came to it. Its connections were like a thousandfold rope stretched as a support across the world. But the twist of the rope became a net in which not merely something occasionally was caught but which was purposely laid for the greatest catch. The money entrusted to the bank was the capital with which it worked. The confidence that the bank enjoyed was used for recommendations of doubtful worth.

The calls made at the bank were exciting—and everyone in the office felt this without expressing it unless by chance—because though apparently paid for the purpose of cool-tempered business, they were actually made in rage or bleeding heartache. The practice was for Julian to speak to the customers first at the clerk's window, subsequently, if they were to be admitted, to show them in. After that he shut the doors between the front and rear offices. One glance often told him enough. This one was a captain from a foreign financial camp; that, a victim. This one wore that satisfied air of conquest that is always thinking up new approaches. The other bore in his countenance the despair of one who knows himself irretrievably lost.

It was not Julian's way to sink himself so deeply in the feelings of others that sympathy gave rise to weakness. But he saw in the simplest play of a gesture the unending possibility of emotion, and he knew enough of the world of humanity to perceive the

chaos of strife and suffering that is betrayed in one such ripple.

Behind the closed doors hissed the shameless conquest, shattering desperation seized hold—and the clerks in the office knew it, though they saw the faces but for a moment, though the words scarcely penetrated to them. Sometimes, however, either the bookkeeper or one of the clerks was appointed to deal with a less important customer.

When Julian had filled this position two years, he was ordered to go to a part of the kingdom where rents were to be collected. It was an outlying province. The people there lived on land inherited from father to son. For centuries the kingdom had taken no account of them. They were never called up in the standing army. They paid no taxes. They had their faith which was the same as that of all mankind but without church affiliation. Their land lay apart and safe, and from generation to generation they had grown strong in peaceful cooperation. They recognized the king of the realm. They sent him ambassadors bringing gifts at stated times. They trusted him, as their fathers had done before them. They thought him good and holy, and in the depths of their hearts slumbered the conviction that if ever any evil should befall them it could never be from him, that, on the contrary, he would do everything to ward it off.

But in recent years the powers of the realm had approached as never before. Railroads had come nearer. From these stepped officials who demanded money for the state. Officers appeared who called up sons to be enlisted in the army. Decrees were issued by a synod, which ruled the life of the churches, declaring themselves heretics.

Their communal life once disturbed and weakened, failure of crops and reverses were harder to bear than formerly; to stock up provisions and seeds they were obliged to mortgage their lands, and the time came when, without completely understanding how it had happened, they were destitute and dependent upon powers outside themselves.

So it was that Julian, on his arrival, found a people that had formerly been excellent in all respects, in open war with church, army and financial power, with the whole state and with powers abroad—and trusting still only in the prince, whom they had never seen. Julian observed that not only in their province but also in all the regions between them and the capital discontent was brewing and that faith was still strong. No one believed that life as it was could be borne any longer. Everyone—even if he did not believe—hoped that the prince would help.

Nothing seemed more natural to Julian. He shared the conviction of the people. He was present when they decided to march to the capital. He was at the head of an army that grew and grew, that, as one man, inspired with faith in the prince who would save them, marched along the quays one cold morning and to the square before the palace where it was to halt. Then out of the side streets where they stood hidden and prepared rushed the prince's glittering troops into the morning mist and, without a word, without a warning, men, women and children were shot, trampled and cut down. Julian was taken prisoner.

Soon after he was sent to a smaller town to be tried.

It was the town where the bakery stood on the neatly cobbled square, where Leonard had formerly delivered his meal. Leonard himself was now the owner of that house and a respectable citizen of the little town that had seen him grow in prosperity. He was a member of the church, an advocate of order which was embodied in the town. He was still unmarried, but he had grown one with the world that had accepted him, and he had spoken loudly with his fellow citizens against the rioters who had disturbed the peace and against their leader who was to be tried.

It was permitted to Julian to send for the clothing he had formerly worn. It was a whim of his, but that was the only costume that reminded him of his youth, of an earlier happiness and of one act of human kindness: the suit of black velvet, and the gray cloak which he had received as a gift from the innkeeper.

On a sunny morning he was led to the gallows. The crowd roared. Soldiers kept an open space on the square. He mounted the ladder and the noose was placed around his neck. He flung the cloak from him.

At that moment, as the hangman kicked the ladder away, he heard a scream. He saw Leonard, with hands outstretched, collapse, and next to him Monica, who, with great tears in her eyes, supported him.

Translated by WILHELMINA C. NIEWENHOUS

Frans Erens

BERBKE

SHE WAS BORN IN THE SOUTH OF THE LAND OF LIMBURG, IN A VILlage near the Prussian border. Her parents were poor and lived in a clay hut which hung from the flank of a sloping meadow like a white die.

When she grew up she looked like a statue of Mary in a little mountain church along the River Rhine. She was small of body, with a round face, and her eyes were large and blue.

She was in service first as a nursemaid with the notary public of the village in which she was born. She stayed there nearly two years. She played with the children and took good care of them. The notary's wife took pleasure in the good nursemaid, and the notary himself smiled kindly into his long beard whenever he saw her. The children ran around her as chickens round the mother hen and they loved to sleep in her lap.

In the end her thoughts were very rarely with her work and sometimes, when she took the children into the neighboring meadow where cows and other cattle grazed, she fell upon her knees and spelled her rosary in a loud voice.

One afternoon, when the sun was setting, throwing a stream of gold through the appletrees, she sat praying in the meadow while the youngest child played all alone with a little bell that a neighbor had brought back from a fair.

Berbke did not notice that a cow approached the child and touched it with her horns, so that its little head began to bleed and it yelled shrilly.

Quickly she picked up the child and carried it into the house; and a man was sent in a hurry to the doctor who lived in a nearby, larger village. Her mistress scolded her and said it was scandalous to leave a baby to its own devices. She did not want Berbke any longer in the house and dismissed her. Crying, the girl climbed up to her small attic room, and there—below the tiles and among the spiders' webs—she sobbed bitterly.

But soon she found other service as a workmaid on a small farm. Generally she stood in the cowshed or in the window opening of the attic, dreaming and looking at the skies and seeing the clouds sail past. When she noticed a bird in its flight she

stared after it till it had disappeared, and when a man or a woman came by, her glance followed them as long as possible. She prayed a great deal, and before she got into bed she knelt down next to it for a long time. In this position she sometimes fell fast asleep and in the morning would still be lying there, wrapped around like an old length of cloth.

The maids and the farmhands made fun of her; at night, after working hours, they sat together in the kitchen and laughed about the simpleton. Yet Berbke never failed to answer back and many a time she deeply hurt a maid or man servant by her sharp retort. Then the man would call her names and the smile would fade from his face. He would stop heckling her, but another would take over. And so things went on till bedtime, almost every evening. But whenever she was alone, she did not work but went on dreaming.

One Saturday morning the farmer approached her while she was sweeping with the broom. "We can't keep you any longer, Berbke. You'd better go." She placed her broom against the wall of the barn and went to her attic room where her large wooden chest was standing. She took her clothes, her old broken mirror, her comb full of hair and the hatbox of blue cardboard, and threw them all into the chest: also her missal and rosary and her worn shirts and her red woolen socks which had been darned with black and yellow cotton. She did not cry but merely went away, saying only that she would have her chest fetched that very day by her father who would call for it with a wheelbarrow.

She went back to the home of her father and stepmother. But they became cross when they saw her and said that she would have to leave again the next Monday to find another job. After all, she was twenty-seven and they could not take her in; they had not enough bread for her to eat.

She now roamed from one village to the other, going to this farm and that; she offered to watch the cows in the clover meadows and to sweep the stables—but nobody wanted her. They said they had no need of her. But they would give her a plate of warm potatoes or a chunk of bread with a little butter. On the tenant farms they let her sleep in the stables or in the meadows where the cows were grazing at night; she drank from the water pools along the road, or from the brook she saw before her and whose pure stream, running over the gravel, brought the sudden awareness of an unquenchable thirst. She had herself locked into churches at night and slept in the confessional until in the morning the sexton came and, upon opening the doors of the

church, saw Berbke crawling out of the confessional, on hands and feet. He seized her, thinking she had stolen from the offertory box.

When for the first time she saw a bicycle passing, she was greatly shaken. With wide-open eyes she stood as if petrified, staring at the man who on his iron wheels disappeared with speed along a curve of the road. She did not understand it and yet she had seen it. But when, next time, another cyclist passed her, Berbke no longer felt astonishment, and looked as it were disdainfully to the other side.

At night she sometimes sat down near a chapel in one of the large forests surrounding her birthplace. She lay down below the tall oaks and went to sleep on the mossy ground whilst above her the crowns of the heavy trees were swishing softly. The wood-pigeons were frightened and took to the wing with nervous flappings and cooings. But when Berbke woke up, after some hours of deep sleep, and heard the night sounds of the forest, she felt afraid, and she cowered. After a while she sat up straight and listened with fear to the dead branches crackling and falling to the ground. Sometimes a terrifying cry resounded through the woods; she did not know what it was, but it made the birds flutter in the tops of the trees. Then a fox would shoot past; she thought it was a dog. She saw the animal rushing along in the dark, and at times something fumbled with the withered old leaves which the wind had blown into heaps.

It was very alarming. She did not know what it was. She thought she saw things floating past and told herself these were ghosts. They were white; and there between the trunks of the trees they halted. The boughs rustled tremblingly in the heavy night.

At other times Berbke believed she saw a human being sitting. But she remained cringing in the many clothes which hung around her body.

Very quietly a little worm would gnaw at the soil next to her. Perhaps it was a mouse, she did not know. And she prayed an Ave so that the Lord might protect her in that black and desolate life.

An owl screeched under the high dome of the forest and from afar came the soft howling of a dog, full of sobbing pain. Then a gust of wind would rattle with the leaves; it was as if spirits flashed by her.

Through the branches Berbke saw a few stars high up in the blue darkness; she thought those were lamps which had been

hung there for her by the Almighty God, whom she imagined as an old man with a long white beard, sitting all by himself somewhere above the clouds.

Sometimes she would hear a carriage in the night slowly winding its way through the forest. At first she was afraid because it seemed as if two lights were coming toward her. But when she knew better she rather liked the thought of poeple coming through the dark. She heard the clatter of horses' hoofs slowly dwindling away, and slept quietly till the early morning.

The chirping of the birds would wake her up. The wood-pigeons began to roocoo loudly high up in the trees, and the finches would twitter fiercely. The morning wind blew fresh through the ocean of leaves and chased the mists away. And high above her the pale blue of the skies would slowly turn into a darker hue.

The sun would rise and strew magnanimously the red patches of early morning over the grey trunks and the dark brown soil. There was a great noise in the boughs and among the leaves, a scraping and scratching, a singing and whistling and shouting of small and larger birds. She liked this very much.

She stood up and, without moving, looked with large eyes at all this happiness above her, and she said to herself, That is beautiful. She then began to pray aloud so that the birds grew frightened and the crows flew off with hasty wing-beats, cawing raucously. She was silent, afraid of her own loud voice and she prayed more softly.

Then she went to the church in the neighboring village, waiting at the door till the sexton came to open it. His eyes were still small with sleep and in a drowsy voice he bade her good morning.

She became dirty and smudgy. She no longer washed herself, and dust and dirt began to collect upon her body. She kept on wearing her old clothes and, if someone on a farm gave her a piece of clothing, she put it on, atop others of a similar kind, so as not to lose it—for she had no home or other storage place.

And so, gradually, she turned into a square bundle of old clothes carried by her small body, wandering along the quiet roads of the district in which she lived. For months she wore the same shirt close to her body, and lice began to march across her sleeves, her back and her chest. She saw them crawl about and looked at them tenderly, her head aslant; they did not frighten her. She let things run their way, around her. Sometimes, if she were alone, she would catch a louse and from a kind of mischief

would squeeze it between her fingers. She would look to see whether it was dead and laughed if some passer-by had seen her do so. A woman scolded her once, and Berbke said, "But they are only small animals."

People began to avoid her and crossed to the other side of the road when they saw her coming. Yet they greeted her in a friendly way, calling out from the opposite sidewalk. She never answered much but went along quietly, in her hand an old bag tightly packed with her rubbish. The wife of a tenant farmer had given it to her one evening when dismissing her; and in it she kept her rosary and an old prayerbook, a yellow cotton vest which she had got from the notary's daughter, a few colored pictures and crumpled bits of paper with nothing in them but in which, Berbke thought, she might some day have something to wrap. There also were a spool of cotton and an old shoe; the other one she had lost. That old shoe, not yet worn like the pair she generally used, she put on when she went to church on Sundays.

There she sat, her prayerbook open in her broad and dirty hands, the eyes cast down; around her head a grey woolen scarf which hung down on her back in a triangle. She knelt motionlessly, a very small, hunched figure, and always stared before her, upon her prayerbook. Sometimes her soft large eyes fluttered brightly upwards and around her, but no one saw her look at others. Yet she saw everything and everybody and nothing escaped her.

Timidly she turned the pages of her missal, for she had learned to read and to write too. She was proud of this, for many other women sat about with their rosaries but Berbke knew that this one and that could not read. There was always a wide space around her, for people were anxious not to touch her.

Sometimes she dared not enter; she remained standing at the church door while inside the organ's thunder made the windows tremble and the song of the choir sailed loudly across the arches.

When the Mass was finished and the congregation passed her, she remained immovable, looking down upon her missal which she held in front of her with broad hands. Girls and boys who knew her called out, "Berbke, Berbke!" But she did not look up and remained standing like a statue, quiet and mild—the large, dirty thumbs widely pressed upon the pages of the open prayerbook. Old women and old men looked at her with a smile, said nothing and went on. The sexton, a lover of dry humor and a man of solemn appearance, who left the church last of

all, once said to her, *"Good-by Maritsibil."* She opened her eyes, large and wide. She looked up at him and smiled, full of respect for this fine-looking gentleman. He went majestically on his way, satisfied with his little joke and laughing to himself because of the halfwit.

She liked listening to a sermon. She well remembered the words of the priest and at night, in the kitchen of some farm or to the people she met, she talked of the beautiful things he had mentioned, "And above his head a little white dove was painted." Thus her thoughts would suddenly focus upon the painting on the sounding board over the pulpit.

One evening in summertime she came to a farm with her traveling bag, a woolen scarf around her head and a warm, heavy, black winter coat around her body. It had been an oppressive day and the walls still reflected the heat. It was eight o'clock. She set down her bag on the floor and stood quietly before the large carriage portal. The milkmaid came outside, saw her standing there and cried, "Heavens, there is Berbke!" She asked whether she might sleep in the stable that night.

From the stables and the kitchen came the men and the maids, and the tenant farmer and his wife as well. They formed a circle around her and looked at her. She cast down her eyes. Then the tenant's wife said it was all right, she could sleep in the cow stable.

Silently, without thanking them, Berbke passed the dung heap on the way to the cow stable, the bag in her hand, her little head softly shaking whilst she carried it. Quietly the others looked after her, touched by the misery of this creature carrying on its lonely existence. When Berbke entered the stable, a large bat streaked past her head and flew in wide circles round the square which was formed by the farm and its barns. Cautiously she made her way past the cow which stood close to the wall. The animal turned its head with the large astonished eyes and touched her with its horns. Berbke was frightened and went on to where the fodder lay heaped behind the manger; and there in the half dark she stood still. The cows looked with amazement at the quiet creature they did not know; and all of them, Berbke and the cows, stood in quiet contemplation. One snorted very loudly, and Berbke trembled. She now thought of placing her bag next to her, on the ground, and she remained standing in the sultry stable air, still wearing her coat and with the woolen scarf around her head.

After a while she took these off in a corner. She sat down on

some bundles of straw, and loudly she repeated the Ave Maria many times, melancholily and tenderly, as if in great sorrow.

The dog in his kennel, chained as it was, barked continuously because of this unusual noise. His yelps were hard and furious and ended on a long-drawn note of pain.

Gradually Berbke's prayers grew quieter and only a few words, some disconnected sounds, drifted along upon the silence, weakly and meltingly. She slept, crumpled up like a parcel of old rags. The cows had lain down and were chewing the cud, snuffling in the thick and sultry stable air, through the darkness.

In the kitchen the farm people no longer thought of Berbke. The maid washed the dishes, and soon the farm lay hushed in a deep slumber. Only the dog howled and barked because of the stranger. In the stable a horse stamped with its feet and in the yard gutter a couple of pigeons were scraping. From an open door came the loud snores of a sleeping groom. Then everything was quiet again, and suddenly there was the clattering of wings and a cock crowed stridently.

It was very warm in the cow house. The air hung mistlike below the beams against which countless flies were crawling. Berbke slept peacefully but when the skies began to pale and the cocks, one by one, started their morning song, she awoke.

She always loved this moment, for it meant the day of light was coming. The nights were full of fears and anxiety, which often made it impossible for her to sleep.

She got up, took her coat and her old apron and hung these out over a thorn hedge, in the meadow. She found a broom and began to sweep the cobblestones of the courtyard. She swept and swept the whole morning and when she had made the round of the court she started all over again. That was her task all day, and throughout many months.

One day it occurred to her that she should no longer sleep in the cow house. Secretly at night she went to a room where the bread was baked. She thought that no one would notice her and lay down upon a sack of potatoes. But late at night, when the tenant farmer made the rounds to make sure that everything was properly locked, he saw Berbke get up from the sack. She said nothing but ran hastily to the window pretending she was afraid it was not well locked. . . . She began to cry.

"Go to the little room upstairs," said the man with compassion. In that room had lived a farmhand who had recently been taken to an institution for the aged. Berbke began to pray aloud and her prayer sounded sadly over the farm, through the night.

But once more the lice came crawling over her clothes and the tenant farmer's daughter found two on her own frock. That was too much. Berbke was sent away.

She took her traveling bag and at night followed the road to a Prussian village close by. There was a farm where she had worked many a time in harvest days. But the farmer's wife did not want her in the house and said that she could sleep in the meadow. It was summer time and the fresh air would do her good.

There she would sit all day and at night she slept somewhere along the thorn hedges, and when it began to rain she stood under a great cherry tree thickly grown with boughs and leaves, and when the thunder rumbled through the clouds and she saw the lightning, she crouched below the deformed trunk of a broad peach tree. Through the darkness she saw the little lamps of fireflies. She was afraid of them. She thought they were ghosts or maybe stars, fallen from the skies.

But to wake up in the meadow was always a festive hour. From across the farm roofs she heard the crowing of the cocks, and the cows were many-colored patches between the trunks of the apple trees. In the clearing, silvery sky she saw the last stars dwindle away, and the blackbirds and titmice flew around her with many other birds. And Berbke wished she had a chunk of bread to make crumbs of for the birds.

She played with the cows, stroking their backs with her broad hands. No longer were the cows afraid of her and they went on grazing when she approached them and tapped them on their backs. But one Sunday when she wanted to go to church, she found her bag bitten to pieces and many of her things as well; a pair of stockings was even missing. The cows had done this during the night, and she complained of it for many days.

The tenant farmer's daughter brought Berbke something to eat: in the morning a slice of bread, at noon some warm potatoes with a flour sauce and in the evening another slice of bread. In the autumn days Berbke ate many apples that fell from the trees. Sometimes she threw a stick at them but this never succeeded; no apple ever fell off. She threw with difficulty after much swaying of the stick above her head; and when at last she had thrown she quickly ran away, afraid that it would fall upon her head.

So she lived on until late autumn. But when the leaves began to wither on the trees and in the hedges and blew across the meadows carried by the wind and rustled over the short grass

that took on a reddish hue, she asked the farmer whether she might not stay and sleep below the sloping roof of the carriage shed. In fact, she had spent many a night there without anyone's knowing. The farmer consented and said, his hand lifted high and pointing toward heaven, "I do this for God!"

The days grew shorter and shorter, and when Berbke had to sit alone in the dark she often cried for hours at a stretch while the hail or the rain clattered upon the roof of the shed as if someone were throwing marbles upon the tiles. In the winter she sat and stared quietly into the darkness that lasted from four in the afternoon till eight of the next morning.

She would recall how she had served in the notary's house for many years; she had had more than now, for now she felt poor and full of sorrow. She remembered everything—the color of the frock her mistress wore on Sunday to High Mass; the little pictures in her room, every corner of the house and in her mind she relived all she had gone through on her journeys through the villages.

Sometimes she talked to herself, repeating what she had said to some girl or boy; then she would suddenly recall a beautiful song heard during vespers in a church, and she began to sing softly in the dark. On the farm and around it everything was quiet; all doors were locked. She sang very slowly among all those old wooden plows and harrows, and the mice would scurry away, frightened. She sang and sang for hours sometimes, until she sat down on the straw exhaustedly and dozed and slept. Often she would spell her rosary all evening, until midnight, and fall asleep during her prayers.

The sharp winds would blow the snow close to her and at times she would wake up all in white.

When the moon shone she wanted to look at the snowfall and in her hands she caught the flakes that came from up high like diamonds. That was a game and she still liked to play like a small child. She saw how between the black boughs of the gigantic pear tree before her the snow fell in the light of the full moon, no wind disturbing its quiet and swinging descent. She let the flakes melt on her hands and her cheeks; they shone like tears and her eyes sparkled joyfully in the silvery light. She thought she was still a young girl of eighteen, though she was nearly forty now. She always lived in memories and it was invariably her childhood and youth she saw in her mind's eye. So she always remained young.

When the feast of the church's patron saint came—and it

lasted eight days in this village—she often went to hear the sermon that was given daily in the church. Two priests had come especially for this purpose.

One afternoon she happened to be badly teased by a stable boy, who with a couple of farmhands and the tenant's son came to fetch the carrots from their storage place. She cried out so wildly and fiercely that the men stopped in amazement. She grabbed a rusty poker and hit the boy upon his back so that he nearly collapsed from the pain.

They told her she would now have to go and confess; otherwise she would go to Hell. She did not answer or show remorse. She said that it had been her good right.

But next morning, at an early hour, Berbke had disappeared. In the whirling snow drift that raced around the church in the whistling wind, she waited before the closed doors.

When she had been standing there for a couple of hours and the snow lay thick upon her shoulders and head, like a crown of innocence, the sexton opened the doors. She waited until Mass had been said, while the snow melted from her clothes and formed a pool on the blue flagstones.

She approached the priest and asked him if she would be allowed to confess. Immediately he went into a confessional and she followed. She told him of beating the boy upon his back with a rusty poker. The priest said seriously that it was not so bad, but that should she do it again the sin would be greater. She did not cry but promised that it would never happen again.

Then she knelt down on a bench to pray. There was no one in the church, but next to the altar sat the priest reading from his breviary. Instead of praying she stared continuously upwards, to the top of a side altar. The priest looked to see if there were something out of the ordinary there. But he noticed nothing and thought, Poor creature. . . .

Toward spring when the leaves came back upon the trees in soft, pale green and the snow of white and pink blossoms hung heavily from the boughs, when the nightingales sang resoundingly and the bees buzzed in thousands over the spring flowers in the meadows of the farm where she had spent the winter, Berbke marched away. Once more she entered the wide world, but she coughed much and grew thinner each day. Her eyes seemed larger, her cheeks were pale and grey, and one morning early people found her lying dead under a hedge along the road.

Translated by JOSEPH W. F. STOPPELMAN

Louis Couperus

OLD TROFIME

I AM BORED. AMIDST THE ROSES I AM BORED. IT IS MAY AT NICE, and very beautiful: it is summer, a summer of roses, round me roses blow in ecstasy. They blow round me, they blow on each side of the iron gate of my villa, and they blow climbing round the two old, old palm trees which stand in my front garden next to a very heavy, old magnolia-tree: a magnolia-tree so heavy and so old that it was trimmed and clipped and cut by a Vandal who does some gardening for me and declared that the magnolia kept out the sun. I myself had never presumed to say any such thing, being afraid to offend that fine, old tree in its beauty and vocation to spread shade and coolness.

I am bored. Amidst the roses I am bored and it is impossible for me to admire all those roses which blow around me; I consider the delirium of the roses really overdone, and I am only looking with a certain silent joy at my magnolia, who has availed himself of Spring to blossom everywhere for all he is worth, the dear old rascal, who is without beauty now, because his trunk is too heavy and too muscular for his youthful twigs and delicate green leaves. . . . He is a little ridiculous, my dear old magnolia-tree, but inwardly I sympathise with him and I wink at him and say:

"You go on, old boy . . . blossom again, put on a new coat of leaves to annoy the Vandal, also because it is the only joy left you, since for years past you have not lifted up your alabaster flower-cups in Spring, like vases full of incense, to honour Her. . . . Go on, old boy; and if you have lost your stately beauty, annoy them all by blossoming for all you're worth. . . ."

The magnolia smiles at me, pacified. (Do not believe, you pedant, that a tree cannot smile!) But in spite of the kindly smile of my magnolia, and in spite of the mad ecstasy and wild delirium of my bacchantic roses . . . I am bored. Oh, how I am bored! I am sitting almost *in* the roses, or rather, in a wicker chair I am lying in the roses, and I am bored, and newspapers are spread open around me.

I am bored. My hands are propped against the back of my

head, and my weary eyes follow, without the least interest, the play of Imperia's tail: my puss who, on the lawn, moves her tail up and down in maternal fashion, to amuse her two babies; a jet-black and a grey one, the one a little devil, the other just like a Danish majolica kitten in a china shop. . . . The black and the grey one clutch with gracefully extended paws at the tail of Imperia, which she swishes maternally to and fro.

Still I am bored. My wife is engrossed in mysterious domestic occupations, and my friend left for Italy the day before yesterday. I consider both the occupation of the one and the departure of the other unfair to me, when I have to be so bored as I am this morning, amidst the roses. . . .

But as I have enough of the philosopher in me to bear my martyrdom, I only sigh very deeply with boredom, and . . .

Suddenly I hear a voice . . .

A voice in the street, calling; the voice of an old man who approaches.

I listen, I recognise the voice and the call and the man.

It is Trofime.

It is old Trofime.

He cries solemnly, like an approaching oracle:

"Je raccomode . . . le verre . . . la faïence . . . et la porcelaine . . . je raccomode le cristal . . . le marbre . . . l'albâtre . . . l'or . . . et les bijoux . . . Je raccomode les précieuses antiquités . . . Je raccomode . . . je raccomode. . . ."

Solemnly the oracle's cry is drawing near, rhythmically, full of dignity. The voice sounds like that of a prophet proclaiming unassailable truths. No one would doubt the truth that Trofime, he who approaches yonder, can repair whatever he calls up before you in a vision of costly splendour and brilliant luxury: not only glass, earthenware, and china, but also crystal, marble, alabaster, even gold and jewels, even antiques of fragile material, but still trembling with a soul: the soul of the Past, which trembles in all things antique.

"Je raccomode! Je raccomode le verre . . . le cristal . . . le marbre . . . l'albâtre . . . !"

The voice of Trofime is solemnly drawing nearer, and it seems that Imperia, too, recognises it, for Imperia's tail regulates its maternal swishing to the rhythm of the approaching oracle: the black and the grey kitten clutch at mother's tail to the time of the prophetic call.

I am very much impressed. My boredom has suddenly gone.

However stately and solemn the prophet's call may be, there is gaiety in the air: a gay breeze passes through the thousands of roses, through the youthful leaves of the old magnolia-tree.

I am still lying in the same attitude, my hands supporting the back of my head, but . . . I smile and am bored no longer. On the contrary, I am amused. And without so much as changing my lazy, but now contented attitude, I cry, when the oracle has approached the gate of my villa:

"Trofime!"

"Je raccomode . . . l'or! Les bijoux! Et les précieuses antiquités!"

What a sonorous voice Trofime has! So sonorous that he has not heard my falsetto cry:

"Trofime!" I call in deeper chest-notes.

A prophet's head appears between the bars of the gate. Dark eyes look searchingly round, a white beard is seen to undulate . . .

"Trofime!" I say. "Good morning! come in. I have just broken something."

The gate of my villa is the only thing the roses have spared. The gate is solemnly opened and a prophet's shape steps in. A bronze-coloured old hat overshadows silver locks. A long pale blue smock envelops skinny, gnarled limbs. And upon his back, on a strap, the prophet carries a square black-enamelled box, like a mysterious shrine.

"Bonjour, monsieur le baron," says Trofime, with great reverence. For we are in Nice, and Trofime, however prophetic in exterior and tenderly artistic in mind towards broken objects of art, prefers to work for the aristocracy and generously distributes titles.

"Trofime," I say, amused, "it is a good thing that you happened to come round, for, would you believe it, my cat over there has done something she never did before; she has broken a little image, a dancing terra-cotta faun, and I wish you could see your way to repair it for me. . . ."

"If monsieur le comte would show me the object of art, I shall be honoured to try and repair the Dancing Faun," says old Trofime oracularly.

I rise and walk up the few steps that give access to my room. From a corner I get the Dancing Faun, who by Imperia's clumsy movement was precipitated from the high old frieze over my writing-desk and has, alas, not danced for weeks now. For the Faun is broken at the ankles: on the pedestal still stand his feet in the rhythm of Dionysian gladness, but he himself lies down

powerless and with a shattered arm of which I have carefully collected the bits. . . .

So I re-enter the garden, in my tender, careful hands the swooning Faun in pieces.

"Look, Trofime, that horrible cat did this, and she was quite callous about it, too . . ."

Trofime looks sidelong, indulgently and roguishly at the culprit who swings her tail to and fro in all the tender luxury of motherhood.

"Old Trofime is very much obliged to Madame 'Pouce' for having for once put him in the way of earning some money," says my prophet, "especially since Trofime—as you know, monsieur le marquis—repairs everything that is broken . . ."

On a garden-table I have exhibited my limp Faun and Trofime says:

"It's as if he were dead. . . ."

"Yes," I say, "it is as if he were dead, Trofime. . . . You must now, like the magician you are, call him back to life, and make him dance again, with that gay movement of his arms in the air. . . ."

"I shall try, monsieur le duc. . . . Where can I work?"

"Shall I instal you over there, under the palm tree?"

"Excellent, but you needn't instal me. You know, I prefer to work on the ground. Then I have everything around me. If only I could have a couple of old newspapers, for the garden is cemented and my 'petite cuisine' might spoil the cement. . . ."

"There are a few newspapers there . . ."

I have not yet read them, but what does it matter? . . . Trofime seizes the open papers and spreads them carefully, weighting them with a few pebbles, to prevent them being blown away.

He lays the limp Faun on the newspapers, and unbuckles the mysterious box from his back.

As for me, well-satisfied and amused, I stretch myself lazily on my long wicker chair, prop my head on my folded hands and look on with a smile. How could one possibly be bored now that so many deliriously blowing roses waft me their odour, and Trofime, who is about to call back my Faun to the dance, is hunched on the ground before me?

I am pleasantly lazy, and, moreover, interested, and so is Imperia, who is looking at Trofime with an air of wisdom and dignity. Though I am convinced that she no longer remembers anything of her clumsiness which precipitated the Faun to the floor. . . .

"I believe that all the pieces are there, even the little arm . . . even all the little fingers . . . monsieur le prince!" says the elated Trofime, whose gnarled but tender fingers fumble among the pieces. "Therefore, I think I shall be able to make the faun dance again. . . ."

"O Trofime!" I say, "Then I shall be so happy, for I am very fond of that little image . . ."

"It is antique, is it not, monsieur le prince?"

For, reader, I have obtained my highest title. I cannot get higher than "prince." Trofime will never, never, to my profound and silent chagrin, call me "Altesse Sérénissime." Let me not be ungrateful. To be grateful for what one gets, is the secret of earthly happiness.

"It is a copy from an antique bronze statue in Naples," I correct him. "And whenever I was sad or gloomy, Trofime, I looked at that little image, and, I do not know why, but something like joy and pleasure in life would come over me, in spite of sadness and gloom, and. . . ."

Trofime smiles somewhat ironically, and while he carefully fills a spirit-stove—he has produced from his box all kinds of bottles and pots and arranged them neatly round him on the outspread newspapers—just like a miniature chemist's shop—he says:

"But then, what real grief and real sadness could monsieur le prince possibly have . . . ? He lives in a splendid villa, he is very rich . . . !"

Why do they all think that I am rich, poor me . . . ?

"He is healthy and young ("Thank you, Trofime") and madame la princesse is adorable . . ." I like that, my wife at once gets the highest title, without the hierarchical ascent . . . "Come now! what grief and sadness could monsieur le prince know! . . . the world's favourites sometimes make themselves believe that they do, but they don't, we only do, monsieur le prince; we, poor devils . . . we know grief and sadness . . . for objects of art can nearly always be repaired, you know, if there are no bits wanting, but when your life is broken, though you may collect the bits ever so carefully, you cannot repair it . . . no, monsieur le prince, that cannot be repaired. . . ."

"Do you think so, Trofime . . . ?" I say, timidly and anxiously.

What has happened to old Trofime, that his life should be broken? And suddenly while I lie lazily in my long chair amongst the roses, whose leaves are falling over me, and look at Trofime, who in a saucer on his spirit-stove makes an alchemistic mixture

of brown and yellow powders, which mixture he continually compares attentively with the tint of my broken faun, and which he stirs with a porcelain staff. . . . I see, I see, though I know nothing, that old Trofime's life is broken . . . ! By whom, by what? I do not know. Perhaps I shall never know, and you, reader, no more than I. His life may have been broken by a woman, by a friend, I know not by whom or what, but broken, broken it certainly is. For look at that man, in his dirty blue old smock . . . His head, while he attentively stirs his mixture in the saucer, is delicate, like an artist's, with its long grey hairs—(the old hat lies on the ground)—with the long grey beard. Only an artist's soul—a painter's, or a sculptor's, anyway, only an artist's soul can look so lovingly on a broken image out of dull, lacklustre eyes. . . . Only an artist's fingers can attempt so lovingly to join the scattered bits of a broken faun . . . And when an artist is very old, with grey hairs and a grey beard, and walks through the town every day, with a black box on his shoulders, in which there are numerous mysterious pots of paint and bottles of glue, and then calls out that he repairs everything that is broken—china and alabaster, earthenware and jewels, gold and valuable antiques—then his life must indeed be broken, irreparably broken, his life the only thing that, irreparable, he cannot join together again into a whole of beauty and joy, a whole of noble line and beautiful colour. . . .

I have become very silent and lie still and motionless, looking at Trofime. Imperia dozes, and the two kittens slumber in her embrace. Around me it is still; the roses smell, the sun is warm and golden, coloured flies buzz about. . . . Everything is still, I am still and Trofime, too, no longer speaks. He manipulates a little brush which he has dipped into his saucer. He daubs with the brush over and along the stumps of the faun's feet, which have remained in a strange rhythmic motion on the square pedestal. And suddenly I start up gladly, despite the melancholy of a moment ago. . . . For Trofime has very, very carefully placed the faun's body on the stumps, lets go his hands—and . . . my faun stands . . . my faun dances . . . though his arm still lies shattered on the newspapers.

"There he stands, monsieur le prince!" says Trofime.

And the thin lips of the old man, compressed with some bitterness under his grey beard, open into a gentle, happy smile. . . . I say nothing. . . . If, a moment ago, after my boredom, I was amused, I am now, after my sadness about Trofime's broken life, touched and moved, and my mood changes and changes. . . . I

am moved, and at the same time very glad, because I see my faun dancing again. . . ? And I say nothing, and look on, as with his brush Trofime juggles the shattered arm into a whole and sound one.

The arm has to dry a moment, and he lays it in the sunlight on the newspaper. And he looks at me, and says:

"We must wait a moment . . . before we glue the arm to the shoulder, sir . . ."

I am no longer "prince," but I do not mind: I am only too glad that my dancing faun lives again. And Trofime, also rejoiced by his magic art, says radiantly:

"You like art very much, don't you?"

"Indeed, I do, Trofime," I say. "That's why I like Italy so much, with its countless treasures."

"I was never there," says Trofime, "but our country is also rich. . . . Our country, too, has treasures. . . . I was in Paris, I saw the Louvre. . . ."

Recollection lights up his lack-lustre eyes . . .

"It is long . . . very long ago," he says. "I remember, sir, I used to be fond of art (like you), of anything that was beautiful . . . and at the same time I had been very piously brought up by my mother. And because she had told me the legend of my patron, of St. Trofime, I afterwards went to see the Venus of Arles . . . in the Louvre. . . . I was a young man then . . . and I was in Paris . . . and I was very fond of art. . . . She is beautiful, isn't she, but my patron, St. Trofime, did not think so, and . . ."

"What is that legend then, Trofime?" I ask, greatly interested.

"Do you not know it, sir? Well, St. Trofime was a pupil of the Apostle Paul and came from Ephesus, in Asia Minor. . . . He wanted to spread Christianity, and landed here at Nice, and he went on to Arles. . . . And when he came to Arles, it was, as now, in the month of May, the month of roses, and all the people rejoiced at the spring and the roses and life, and they danced, danced in long rows, holding each other by the hand. Women, men and children danced, crowned with roses, as they did in ancient times when they were merry and gay: they danced in long, long rows and assembled singing and dancing round the rose-crowned statue of Venus, who holds in one hand the apple and in the other the mirror: the Venus of Arles; she stood in an open temple, a round temple of columns, you know, sir, and they danced round the temple, and round the Venus, thanking her for the glorious May, for the roses and for life. . . . Then came St. Trofime, with his followers, for he had already converted

many. And when St. Trofime saw the people dancing and singing, crowned with roses, he stretched forth his arms. . . ."

Trofime has risen, his beard and locks are a silvery grey, he is tall and loose-limbed in his blue smock, and he stretches forth his arms towards me, where I am still lying on my long chair, under the roses. . . .

And it is as if I no longer see Trofime . . . but his patron himself . . . the holy Trofime. . . .

"He stretched forth his arms," continued Trofime, "and his eyes shot lightning; and he cursed . . . he cursed with one imprecation after another the dancing, singing people. . . . He cursed them because it was sinful to sing and to dance round the Venus, who held the apple as she had been the most beautiful of the three goddesses. . . . He cursed the sinful people with all the force of his voice and his word, with all the strength of his new faith . . . and then, then a thunderstorm gathered over the town and the people went mad with fear and fled in all directions. But St. Trofime continued his curses, which he now directed against the Venus herself, Venus, who, rose-crowned, looked constantly at her apple with a smile, and then, sir, lightning shot from the dark sky and struck the glorious statue, so that it fell down and was shattered to pieces . . . and the people fled, fled in terror, but those who did not flee gathered round St. Trofime, and knelt down, and begged for mercy, and he converted them all to Christianity: he remained at Arles and was the first bishop there . . ."

"It is a beautiful legend," I said; "and you have told it beautifully, Trofime. I should only like to know how the statue of the Venus of Arles, if it was shattered by the imprecations of your patron who caused her to be struck by lightning . . . was yet called back to life and beauty again, so that it still stands as an everlasting joy in the Louvre at Paris . . . could you not tell me that?"

"No, sir," says Trofime, with a significant smile, "I could not."

And he crouches down again, after his prophetic recital, and I see that he carefully fits the arm of my faun to the statuette, which, on the newspapers, seems to revive more and more every second.

"Then I will tell you, Trofime," I say, glad, lazy and with numberless rose-leaves blowing about around me, for there is a breeze now. "Then I will tell you. The white goddess of Arles, though lightning struck her, revived from her fragments without the repairing art of any of your colleagues, but only because

the gods are immortal, because they are the eternal beauty, which no prophet's word and no stroke of lightning have ever been able to destroy. She has spontaneously risen from her *débris.*"

The old Trofime looks at me, and his bitter mouth smiles gently.

"You may be right, sir," he says, reflectively. "I believe that formerly . . . I sometimes thought as you do now. . . . What is beautiful does not perish unless savage barbarism . . . and callous cats destroy it. Fortunately old Trofime is your faithful servant to repair, at least, what Madame la Pouce has knocked over. . . . You see: your little faun dances . . . he dances again . . . with his same gesture . . ."

And Trofime tenderly imitates the gesture with his arms in the blue, dirty sleeves of his smock. . . .

"And if you would allow me now to take him to the place in your room where you put him to look at when you are sad or gloomy, that you may become cheerful again . . . then I should feel much more easy about it, for it is not quite dry yet, and another might destroy my labour. . . ."

Trofime has risen. He shows me in his loving hands my dancing faun. My faun dances again! Only a moist tint is spread over his ankles and shoulder: for the rest my faun dances as before. I am as glad as a child that has a toy given back to him. Trofime climbs on a chair: Trofime himself puts the faun on the point of the frieze dancing airily, airily, with arms uplifted . . .

Imperia has drawn nearer and looks up, inquisitive, wise and yet indifferent.

"Take care, you!" I threaten. "If ever you climb on the frieze again!"

She purrs and rubs herself against my knee. My threat makes no impression. . . .

How glad I am! And how surprised my wife will be when she comes in presently, finished with her mysterious domestic occupations, when she sees the faun dancing again. Look how gaily and gracefully, and yet powerfully, he moves in his immobility!

"Thank you, thank you, Trofime," I say, and squeeze his two gnarled hands, hands of an artist who turned workman.

"This is too much honour, sir," says Trofime, equally rejoiced at what his art has been able to call back to life. . . .

He turns a last look on the faun, and he also threatens the ever-callous Imperia. He puts his "petite cuisine" back into the black box, and he crumples up the stained newspapers into a ball and flings it over my gate. He has fastened his box round

his shoulders, and put on his soft hat. And now, contented and gentle, and glad, too, because he has repaired something beautiful that was broken, he thanks me and gives me back my first titles, with that vain weakness of his to work for the aristocracy only.

"Too much honour, monsieur le comte! Et merci, monsieur le baron!"

He lifts his hat with a graceful gesture of his hand. I see his last smile through the roses . . . his undulating beard . . . he vanishes. . . .

And suddenly I hear, sonorous and solemn, like the call of a prophet's voice, like a retreating oracle, Trofime's voice in the street:

"Je raccomode . . . le verre . . . la faïence . . . et la porcelaine . . . l'or . . . les bijoux . . . et les précieuses antiquités . . . je raccomode—"

The call grows weaker, the voice dies away . . .

I lie among the roses and smile and my eye feels moist. Why? I do not know . . .

There my wife appears on the steps of my room. She smiles because she sees me so lazy.

"What have you done?" she says, pleasantly.

"I? nothing . . ." I say, slightly embarrassed. . . . "I have done nothing this morning . . . but Trofime . . . *he* has done something! Look at the frieze."

My wife turns round, and sees the faun: he dances; she is glad, glad as I am . . .

"Trofime is very clever," says my wife; "he repairs everything . . . everything."

Yes, Trofime repairs everything; gold and jewels, marble and alabaster, china and objects of art. . . .

Only his own life, alas . . . his own life, his life that I know not who or what has broken, Trofime has never been able to repair. . . .

Poor, old Trofime . . . !

Translated by J. KOOISTRA

(From Louis Couperus, *Old Trofime,* copyright 1930, F. V. White, London)

Frans Coenen

IMPERSONAL MEMORIES

IT WAS IN HER EIGHTIES THAT SHE NOTICED A SWELLING UNDER HER breast for the first time, a small lump, which hardened quickly, so that she knew almost immediately what disease had showed its symptoms there. And, when there was no longer any possible doubt, she sat down in insane fear. Not because of the threat of death: what more could she expect from life! But, as before, it was disgust at her own body, its secret, autonomous workings, which cruelly dictated her fate and forced her to reveal to people her shocking deviation from the normal. All her life she had struggled against this revelation; she would do it again. Though she knew that there was no social curse attached to this disease, it still had in her ears a dangerous, threatening, contagious sound. She did not give a thought to medical treatment. She had a horror of any medical intimacy, which would unavoidably bring her great failing to light. She could only try to hide her shame.

And this thought, along with the pain gradually added to it, became an obsession with her, a continual worry and distrust, ever increasing in violence and absorbing her more and more. She cut herself off from human contact almost completely, and the people she still chanced to meet were treated in a gruff, almost inimical manner. Old Doctor Ferguson, a family friend of the Le Roys who came to see her occasionally, was warned each time that she only wanted to see him as a friend, certainly not as her doctor. As far as lawyer Schermer was concerned, her suspicion grew with every visit. Wasn't he anticipating her property, about which he knew everything and she so little. Putting his chair so that he would face the light, she watched his face sharply and was gradually convinced that he was cheating her and making away with her money. So she began to flatter him and to buy his honesty by rather plain allusions to making him her heir. Of this she really had not the slightest intention. And, to be at least partially safe, she asked to have certain of her documents. The man did not understand and saw in this nothing but the idiosyncrasy of a rich old lady. . . . But, once she had cut the coupons, she did not dare convert them into cash again and kept

them as well as she could in books and under the linen, until she would be able perhaps to turn them in herself.

But she hardly went out any more. She was afraid to be among people. From the large bedroom, with its strangely frivolous furniture, she went into the living-room on the same floor, her tall figure more and more bent, leaning on a cane. And the haughty face with the deep lines along the mouth became flaccid and the skin grey, as her disease became worse and she also neglected herself. This floor was like a menagerie, there were four dogs and three or four cats, with tom cats added, that were no longer let out and that filled the house at times with their howling. The increasing smell of cats, in the bedroom as well as in front of the door, did not seem to be noticed by Louise any more, who now sat at times on the floor, conversing with the animals, who according to the way they behaved, were petted or repulsed by her.

And though she forgot the world of people in deep contact with more simple animal nature, she would become mortally frightened when the impenetrable gaze of the tom cats was bent on her for a long time. Then she would wake up and would chase them away and suddenly become so keenly aware of her loneliness that she almost wanted to cry out.

But she was still able to control herself, for she was afraid of the world of servants downstairs, where she no longer appeared. There was a vague fear in her that they would come storming upstairs and murder her if she made them too much aware of her existence. It was better to let them steal from her a bit here and a bit there. That she could not prevent, could only try to keep as much as possible in safety. Thus she tried to hide a lot of silverware and used only "plate," which would rouse no desire. Yet she could not bear that she should be cheated too boldly and, as anything might happen to her horse-and-carriage now that she no longer went out driving, she ordered the coachman to drive along the canal every afternoon, while she sat at the window and watched the carriage.

The evenings, however, became the hardest to live through. The animals went to sleep early and kept aloof. Then she could no longer stand the congealed silence of the room with its ticking clock, and she would go to bed, but could not sleep. She heard indiscreet noises rise from downstairs and sometimes stiffened with fright as a door was shut with a bang.

Then she would listen attentively, bent over witchlike in her nightgown at the door slightly ajar. . . . When the fun had again

died down to a whisper, she was aware of a deep silence exuded from the feebly lit staircase, where the pale statues seemed to listen themselves in their motionless attitudes. Aghast she would close the door, but feel immediately behind her the tenseness of the high hollow space of the room, which she had forgotten. . . . Then she would light all the lights, waken the small dogs, caress a sleeping cat and feel almost at peace, until a stronger attack of pain would distract her from awareness of her fears.

But the time came when at night and also during the daytime she dared no longer stay alone and wanted somebody to sleep near her. But the maids—who changed about every month in spite of their high wages—refused to stay in the company of this weird human being in its pestiferous atmosphere during the night, and they were then dismissed because of their insolence. So finally there remained only a cleaning woman, who was willing to take on the task, a stalwart woman with fiery grey eyes in a bony face and the walk of a queen. Poverty—her husband had lost his job on account of drunkenness—made her ready to accept anything, but at the same time she felt a certain affection for the unfortunate rich being, was vaguely aware of the old woman's situation, though she never alluded to it.

She, and a somewhat simple-minded man, were the only servants that Mrs. Le Roy trusted and with whom she considered herself safe. The others, under the supervision of the powerful cook, she felt creatures in an inimical world, which concerned her as little as possible. Out of this world came also new lady's maids, whom she received with suspicion. They had to take care of her quite extensive wardrobe, but never stayed for any length of time in the queer, bad-smelling house, where the mistress was a witch and the kitchenfolk a rough lot. So Koos, the cleaning woman, also acted as lady's maid from time to time and furnished the little help Mevrouw required personally. But, beyond having her hair done, she would not tolerate anyone's touching her body. Now less than ever, now that there was sometimes bleeding, sometimes terribly painful wounds on her breast, which she hid shyly.

But at night, after she had allowed Koos to go to bed and was convinced that the woman was asleep, she sat down and undressed on the sofa with the flowered designs and began exceedingly carefully to loosen the sticky chemise from the wounds. And Koos, who always pretended to be asleep, saw the feebly lit figure, whose shadow shot out monstrously from the background as she bent forward. She heard the choked moaning, she saw the face distorted by pain as the flames shot up in the fireplace, as

the hand silently dabbed at the chest with lukewarm water, and the old lady finally threw the chemise into the fire. And Koos' heart beat with shuddering, superstitious fear and pity.

But she never dared allude to what she had seen, or give advice, after she once had furiously been called down and threatened with immediate dismissal.

It was in this manner that Mrs. Le Roy passed the last years of her life, between pain and delusions, with her animals that nevertheless did not save her from loneliness and could not prevent her anxiety. As to reading, except for the French newspaper she read nothing any longer, because she lay for long periods of time under the influence of drugs which she finally, at her wit's end, had obtained from Doctor Ferguson.

And the only thing that kept her fiercely busy, during the few clear hours in the afternoon, was her will. As comfortable as possible, she sat in the large chair near the window, half turned to the light, so that only her profile was visible. The notary, sitting in the light from the large table, listened patiently to her elaborate explanations and only gave careful and professional advice. The testatrix was particularly obnoxious to him, but she had brought a great deal of money his way. She apparently experienced a vengeful satisfaction by leaving her family, but specially that of Le Roy, out of her will. They had never paid any attention to her, she said. But she really took vengeance upon her whole circle, all of whom she had envied in their shameless health and whose contempt and derision she had felt during her whole life. They had never taken a step toward her, so they would not have any need of her money.

At the same time she wanted to wreak her vengeance upon Le Roy, who had indeed greatly sinned socially. But had not his weakness dealt with him in the same way as she had suffered from her failing? And did not this weakness at the same time denote a refinement of taste, which he had not been able to develop in this dull world? He had possessed gifts that might have lifted him way above the money-making and business circles, if they had been recognized at the time. . . . She then wanted to do him justice and perpetuate his name. Nobody could prevent her from perpetuating his name in and with this house, which he had embellished and filled with artistic treasures. It would be given to the community as a legacy, to be kept eternally in both their names as a museum. Thus the world would accept and recognize,

after their death, what had been so cruelly kept from them during their lives.

Trembling with excitement, the old woman had the legal document read and re-read to her. And with it she felt that the principal part of her last task had been fulfilled. She cared little for the rest and she followed her notary's advice with regard to other legacies. The legacy itself she had long ago destined to an acquaintance from Le Vésinet, a former Amsterdam merchant who had retired from business and certainly had never expected her money. What he, as an old man, would do with it in the future was a matter of profound indifference to her.

A little less than a year after Mrs. Le Roy had finished her will, she died.

She was often laid up in bed and sometimes unconscious. The nursing, that is as much of it as she tolerated, was principally done by Koos and by a hunchbacked little seamstress whose face she could bear. They took care of her, after a secret consultation with Doctor Ferguson. It was only a question of washing and easing her pain. More she did not want, because until the end she hid her illness from those around her and, in pain and dizzy weakness, she sat stiffly in her chair at the window. The cats had to be brought to her and she caressed the small dogs, whose playfulness she could hardly endure any more. But after an hour or so she would order the servants to carry her to her bed in the large bedroom and would take a sedative in order not to lie awake all night long in pain. Yet this happened often, when the drug took effect too quickly. But sometimes the pain was not too acute and she would lie quietly listening to the noises of the night. She thought then about her last will and how because of it the house would never again serve as a home. She was the last of a long row of generations whose life had passed within rooms, within these walls.

Nothing had remained of them but this house, which had received them indifferently and had seen them pass away. She had loved the house, the home of her parents and of her marriage. And she had now dedicated it to herself. She had had the power to do it, so that in the future it would only exist about and for itself. A museum is for nobody and belongs to nobody. It only fulfills its own purpose.

She experienced a feeling of satisfaction because she had been able to do this for a double purpose: to perpetuate both their

names, spiting the good world, and to make the house into a personality, never again to be devoted to an indifferent posterity.

Louise Diefenbach, Mrs. Le Roy, died during a rough night in January. Nobody was with her. She had been unconscious, and the little seamstress who was watching her had seen no objection to going to the kitchen for a short while, to make herself a cup of coffee. There the cook and another servant were still awake, and her absence had been longer than she had originally intended.

When she came upstairs again into the dimly lit room, everything was over. The little woman had quite a fright when she no longer heard the breathing and saw the relaxed features and broken eyes as she held the lamp high.

Then followed a hurried walking back and forth in the house by the servants, who were made restless by the unexpected, uncontrolled death, as if they might be suspected of all kinds of things. The cook decided that Mrs. Le Roy's most trusted manservant ought to try to awaken the notary, who would decide what was to be done. He ought also to stop at the doctor's. In the meantime nobody was to be allowed to remain in the room of the dead. The cats had to be watched.

Within an hour Doctor Ferguson was there. During his examination he recognized what he had always suspected and he remained for a moment in deep thought. How that woman must have suffered! And, remembering her marriage, he thought how little life had brought her in spite of her riches.

Then he went to the living-room and had some wine brought to him and waited for Mr. Schermer, who came upstairs at dawn, sleepy and shivering.

The last tragedy of the house had come to an end.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

Herman Heijermans

CANDY

"DON'T FORGET TO BRING ME A FOOTSTOOL."

The boy sloshed with his bare feet through the wet sand.

"What a beautiful evening! Don't you think so?"

"Yes, ma'am—beautiful."

"And what a lovely sea. . . . There isn't a ripple on it."

"Yes, ma'm, very smooth."

"Thank you, my boy."

They are sitting on the sands, the four of them, very cozily, he with his legs crossed, looking dreamily towards the sea. His wife chats with the guests.

"Uncle, isn't it drafty, where you are?"

"No, Corry."

"You'd better put your collar up, Hank. You catch cold so easily."

"Oh no. Leave me alone. . . . I'm all right. It's fine here."

"Corry, put your feet on the stool. The sand is very damp at night."

"Would you like a candy, Auntie?"

Mrs. Tas dips into the paper bag with her heavily ringed fingers.

"No, you must take one of these fondant centers. They're lovely. See? They're Droste's. Corry . . . want one too? Here . . . take that one in the silver paper."

"Aren't you a sweet tooth, Laura!"

"Huh! as if you don't like candy. Mr. Tas, would you like to have a piece?"

"Thanks, Laura."

"What a lovely evening!"

"Beautiful . . . heavenly."

There is a moment's silence. He smokes his cigar and looks at the pale little clouds that are broken up by the evening wind. His wife is rubbing the tip of her tongue against her teeth, to flatten the not-so-soft center of her candy. Corry chews, and picks at the sand with her parasol; gray particles fly into the water. Laura fumbles with the paper bag and cracks a sugar bean.

"You know who that is?"

"Who . . . ? That lady with the shawl?"

"No, further back."

"No, Auntie, I don't."

"That's the Princess who's staying in our hotel."

"Who? the one over there . . . in black?"

"Mm, mm . . ."

"Gee! Doesn't she dress simply? You wouldn't say she's a princess."

"That's right. At dinner she doesn't wear anything in particular. Yesterday I sat next to her. Well . . . she ate everything and when she got up she said: 'Auf Wiedersehen.'"

"Isn't that nice?"

"Didn't you talk to her?"

"No, because my German is not so good and . . . er . . . I didn't quite know how to address her."

"Well, you say 'Prinzessin,' of course."

"That's not so *of course.* You don't say 'King' to a king, do you? No, it's not so easy."

"She's coming our way again."

"Hank, take off your hat when she passes."

"Uncle is asleep."

"Hank . . ."

"What's up now?"

"Take off your hat to the Princess, will you?"

"Must you wake me up for that?"

"Did you see how sweetly she greeted us in return?"

"She looks high class all right."

"Well, I don't think so. Is that the Prince?"

"No, the Prince will be here tomorrow."

"Would you like to have another candy, Mrs. Tas?"

"I don't mind if I do. . . . Are those brown ones nice? I think I'll take one of them."

"Corry . . ."

"Hold the bag a little closer."

"Mr. Tas . . . have another soft candy. Come on, take another one."

"Uncle's fallen asleep, Laura."

"What . . . ? Again? Hank! Hank!"

"Ah, leave him alone, Auntie. He's sure to be tired."

"Hank, you might at least put your cigar aside. . . . Now look at him making a mess of himself with the ashes!"

With her handkerchief Auntie wipes the ashes from Uncle's trousers. Uncle doesn't stir; his head has sagged away, on a slant against the side of the beach chair. Auntie sees nothing of him but the point of his brown beard, the gleaming of his gold-rimmed eyeglasses and the tip of his nose.

"After dinner, when he falls asleep, he always makes a mess like that with his cigars."

"Is Uncle's health getting any better here, Auntie?"

"Better? He is as strong as a lion. It's all imagination. . . . He's never been sick yet."

"But he wrote Father he felt very weak."

"Nonsense, he is as healthy as I am. One day he's got a weak heart, the next he's got a liver disease and then it's his spinal cord. . . . All imagination, that's what it is."

"He looks pretty well."

"That's right, he does."

"Have another sweet, Auntie."

"Not now, child . . . a little later."

"You, Laura?"

"No, no, not that one. I'd like that toffee."

"Is there a rhyme in it?"

"Just a minute. . . . Yes . . . there it is."

"Let's have a look at it!"

"'*The beat of every loving heart brings . . .*' Oh, what a pity! There the wind blows it away. . . ."

"Is it high tide now?"

"Can't you see that for yourself?"

"Well, then we shouldn't stay here much longer."

"Oh, we can stay at least another ten minutes."

"Isn't the ocean lovely when it gets dark?"

"Mm . . . You see that little white cloud . . . over there? That's where the sun has set."

"And do you see the lighthouse, far away?"

"What a light! You'd swear it was just next to you."

"Are you getting cold, Auntie?"

"Yes; at night it's always chilly on the beach."

"Look'it . . . how close the water is coming!"

"Won't Uncle catch a cold?"

"Oh, no. He dozes here every night."

"Couldn't his cigar set him afire?"

"His cigar? Where is his cigar?"

"He dropped it."

"No, don't pick it up, Corry. He wouldn't smoke it any more, anyhow."

"Look, look at that yacht! I wouldn't like sailing at night."

"Hah, the sails almost touch the water. Isn't it terrible? Ooh, ooh!"

"Ooh, ooh!"

"Ooh!"

Auntie and Corry and Laura jump up and down, with little cries of fear. Suddenly the tide comes in with such force that the water spatters their lacquered shoes, but rolls back immediately.

"Shouldn't we go and sit somewhere else?"

"No, Auntie, let's stay here."

"It's so lovely here, Mrs. Tas. Just another minute."

"You're such children."

"This afternoon I saw a man sitting on the beach and he remained where he was till the water had passed him by. Then he had to take off his shoes and socks. You should have seen him, Laura. He looked so funny . . . you'd have died with laughter."

"Was that the fellow with the red whiskers?"

"Yes, that's right. Did you see him too?"

"Won't you have another candy, Mrs. Tas?"

"Well . . . just one more."

"Take that one in the gold paper. That's a glazed chestnut. How do you like it?"

"Look out, Laura, for the wave."

"No, that didn't come that far . . . You, another one, Corry?"

"Are there any more toffees left?"

"Just one."

"Now I'll be more careful. Here's the paper."

"What are you laughing about?"

"Huh, listen to this nonsense. Hah, hah, hah . . . it's good enough to make you faint: *'His eyebrows and his hair are red, he'll love you till he's cold and dead . . .'* "

"That's the man of the beach chair this afternoon."

"Come, girls, don't be so childish! Don't you think we ought to go and sit somewhere else now? C'mon, Hank."

"Heh, Auntie, just one more wave."

"It's getting very chilly, children."

"Oh, oh, hurray!"

"Well, that was touch and go."

"You'd better get up, Auntie. We'll bring your chair along."

"Call Uncle too. His feet will get wet."

"Heh, no. Let him sit in the water for once."

"No, no, no."

"Look, Auntie, this way. . . . A footstool under his feet and he can stay at least another minute. When the water's all around him, we'll call him. Yes?"

They laugh and wait for still higher waves to roll along. Uncle sits high and dry, his feet neatly on the footstool. All they see are his knees and his trouser legs, well pulled up, one sock that has come down and his shoes. The round form of the yellow beach chair contrasts sharply with the almost jet-black expanse of the ocean. It seems as if the little hills of white foam run straight towards it, inexorably. . . . But very close by they slide away, like a knife scraping across a board.

"I've only got three pieces of candy left."

"No, Laura dear, I don't want any more."

"Come on, Mrs. Tas, *that* one is nice."

"This one is for you, Corry. So . . . finished."

"Auntie, look. There's the Princess again."

"She stays late on the beach, don't you think?"

"She spoke to us again; didn't you notice? What a nice woman!"

"Yes, she's not a bit proud—that must be said."

"Hurray, hurray! The water's all around Uncle now."

"Hendrik . . . Hank!"

"Hen . . de . . rik!"

"Uncle . . . , Uncle . . . Uncle!"

"Hah, hah, hah . . . He won't know where he is when he wakes up."

"Hen-de-rik! Hen-de-rik!"

"Mr. Tas! . . . Mr. Tas. . . !"

"Uncle! . . . Uncle!"

"Well, there you are. Now he doesn't hear us because of the noise the water makes."

"It doesn't matter. I don't mind running through the water."

"No, don't you do it. You'll get your feet wet for nothing. . . . Hey, boy . . . , boy! Just run to that gentleman in the beach chair and say he's got to wake up."

"Aw'right, ma'm."

"Such a good boy he is. Does anything you like."

"What's he looking at now?"

"Wake up . . . the gentleman! . . ." Corry shouts against the wind.

"The man . . . is so fast . . . asleep," the boy shouts back.

"Give him a good shake," shouts Mrs. Tas, the fondant melting in her mouth.

The boy shakes him. In the falling dusk they can see the yellow chair, the trouser legs, the pulled-up knees and the boy in his bare feet leaning over the chair, shouting and shaking.

"Hen-de-rik! Hen-de-rik!"

"Uncle!"

The boy comes sloshing back through the water.

"Looks as if the gentleman is dead," he said. "He lies all in a heap in the chair, and he's ever so *cold*. . . ."

"What's that?" says Auntie, frightened. On her lacquered shoes, still sucking at the tough bit of fondant, she wades through the

foaming, bubbling water and begins to shake her husband who lies there, staring toward the ocean with great, dead eyes.

"Hen-de-rik! Hen-de-rik . . . Hank . . . Hank!"

Uncle had quietly passed away. . . .

Translated by JOSEPH W. F. STOPPELMAN

Herman Heijermans

GRAN'MA

ANXIOUSLY, WITH SHORT NERVOUS JERKS OF HER BONY SKELETON hands, she rubbed her knees, which came protruding through the worn cloth of her blue serge frock. If only he'd come, if only he would come soon. Such a playful boy! Gertrude might be back any time now. Then the fat would be in the fire; there would be another row and plenty of shouting. Where could he be . . . and she'd told him so to hurry. . . .

There was the bell. Was it Gertrude or one of the children? Now the maid was opening the door. It was he. Only Georgie bounced up the stairs that way, without even wiping his feet. . . . Thank God!

"Is it you, Georgie?"

"Yes, Gran'ma."

From his trouser pocket the little fellow pulled a medicine bottle, half filled. She took it with her trembling old hands and uncorked it, smelt it, closed it up again and slid it hastily into her pocket.

"How much have you got left?"

"Fifteen cents."

Carefully he counted out the warm cent pieces upon the window-sill.

"They're for you, Georgie. Will you say nothing?"

"No, Gran'ma."

"Your mother needn't know of it, you hear?"

"No, Gran'ma."

"Now you go and buy yourself some marbles. No candy, you hear?"

"Yes, Gran'ma."

She heard him rush down the stairs as he always did—two, three steps at a time. Now, quick—before anybody came in. The

bottle neck click-clacked against her teeth; her bony hands trembled violently. Umm, umm. . . . No more now. The rest for tonight. Umm . . . that made you a different being. . . .

Ring . . . a . . . ring . . . a . . . ring. . . . That's sure to be Helen; she always pressed the bell so long when she came from school.

"Hello, Helen dear."

"Hello, Gran'ma."

"What time is it?"

"Half-past four . . . Smells sort o' funny here. . . ."

"Funny . . . ? Funny smell . . . ?"

"Yah; I don't quite know like what."

"Maybe it's the flowers."

"Isn't Mommie home? Jane . . . Janie. . . ."

"Yes, miss."

"What are we having for dinner today?"

"Lamb chops."

"With what?"

"With string beans."

"And what have we got for dessert?"

"Strawberry jelly."

"Give me a hand with the tablecloth, will you?"

Jane, with her red hands, held two corners of the cloth, Helen the others.

"Isn't it a scandal, miss, the way Georgie makes the runner dirty?"

"Has he been out?"

Jane nodded.

"Uh-huh . . . he went on an errand for Gran'ma."

"Gran'ma, has Georgie been out for you, Gran'ma?"

"For *me* . . . ? No, nothing for me."

"Jane . . . *don't* you smell something funny?"

"Maybe it's the silver I cleaned this morning. We used gin and chalk."

"Oh? . . . Will you bring the plates in, Janie?"

Helen laid the table. She laid it for seven people; every day seven plates in the same places. Pa sat at the head of the table opposite the window; he had a napkin with a silver ring. Mommie sat next to him with a red velvet napkin ring. Next to Mother was Kees, and Helen sat on his left. On Pa's other side was Mary's place. She always had to have the cut-glass goblet with "For Your Birthday" engraved on it. She'd had it from Georgie and her, together. And next to Mary came George; next to George was

Gran'ma's place. Gran'ma had a brass napkin ring, a beautiful one carried by two little dogs.

"Janie, will you bring in the cruet and the table mats?"

"Helen dear, think of your father's apéritif."

"Yes, Gran'ma, yes . . . I don't forget nothing."

"Don't be so catty."

"Well, I can't help it . . . You're saying the same thing every afternoon. . . . Jane, Janie, where are you now?"

"I'm going to open the front door to your mother, miss."

Mother came in with Mary. They had been shopping—four ounces of Maria cookies for the tea and some trimmings for Helen's new hat.

"Nobody been, Jane?"

"No, ma'm."

"Who made those filthy marks on the white runner? . . . What a shame! . . ."

"Master Georgie, ma'm."

"But his father has forbidden him to go out after school."

"I don't know nothing about that, ma'm."

"Did *you* send him out, Mother?"

"Huh . . . what . . . ? I? . . . I haven't seen him yet."

"There, he's just ringing."

"You bad boy—hasn't your father forbidden you to go out into the street before dinner?"

"Yes, Ma. But I had loaned one of my textbooks to Hendrik and I had to have it back for tonight."

"What've you got in your pockets?"

"Nothin' . . ."

"What nothing. . . . Now look at all those marbles! Where did you get the money for them?"

"I got them for nothing."

"You're lying."

"No . . . I *really* did get them."

"You're *lying*."

"No, Ma, I'm not."

"Did you go out for Gran'ma?"

"No, Ma."

"On your word of honor?"

"No, Ma. . . ."

"Good afternoon."

Pa and Kees came home together from the office.

"Isn't it nice and cool today? . . . How are you, Mother? . . . Have you got something good for dinner, Jane?"

"Lamb chops, sir."

"Helen, where's my drink?"

"Mother, give me the keys, will you?"

"What is this nonsense? Why're you locking away the gin nowadays?"

"All right, all right. . . . Here it is. . . ."

"Does the maid . . . er . . . try to get at it?"

"No."

"Mother . . . a small glass for you too?"

"Don't give Mother any gin, Charles."

"Aw . . . come on. . . ."

"Really—it isn't so good for her."

"Oh, come. When you'll be ninety, you'll like a drink too."

With glittering eyes the old lady followed every movement of her son who, close to the window, filled a tiny tumbler with the colorless liquid.

"Don't give it her, Charles."

"What's it got to do with you?" old Gran'ma snapped, crossly, and her skeleton hand grabbed the glass.

"Because it isn't good for you . . . that's why."

But already the glass was empty. Gran'ma smacked her lips, in heavenly after-joy. Her dark eyes, shining brightly in the wrinkled yellow face, gleamed with delight. Charles was a good son . . . but her daughter-in-law didn't like her. She knew that all right. . . . However, everything was fine now, just fine.

"Are you all coming to the table?"

Charles shared out the lamb chops. There were eight; the largest for his wife, the smallest for the maid who could not stand meat anyway because she had stomach ulcers.

"Jane, your plate. Mary, hand this on to your Gran'ma. George, keep your fingers out of the gravy."

Then the string beans made the round; the potatoes and the gravy followed. There was a moment's lull, disturbed only by the forks and the smacking sounds the old woman made.

"Kees, you are very quiet today."

"Yes?"

"Uh uh; he's in love, Ma."

"Keep quiet, you."

"Oh, look, look, what's up? Look at Gran'ma . . . !"

"Good God. . . . What's wrong with the old woman?"

She had sagged away in her armchair; of her eyes only the whites were visible. Georgie began to howl, and the women looked on with shocked, white faces.

"Get some water and don't sit there like pillars of salt!" father shouted.

Kees was sprinkling vinegar over Gran'ma's head.

"George, stop bawling at once!"

"If only she isn't going to die! Oooh! . . ."

"Hold your tongue, you good-for-nothing!"

They had lifted the old woman and laid her on the sofa. The gray patches of her hair were like smudgy flakes on the red couch pillow.

"Give her some air at the throat. . . ."

"Cum'on. Cum'on, Helen. Get going."

Helen and Mary opened Gran'ma's frock; Kees held the vinegar bottle under her nose and Charles rubbed her corky, skeleton hands.

"What's that? . . . What are you taking out of her pocket?"

"A bottle."

"Let me smell!"

First the woman smelt and then the man.

"Well, in all the world. . . . How did she get this gi . . . ?" the man asked furiously.

"Keep quiet."

They looked at one another and kept their mouths shut, for the children's sake.

"She is coming to, Pa."

"Shall we lay her on the bed?"

"No, let her first come to completely."

"Feeling better now, Mother?"

Quickly Gran'ma opened her eyes, looking vaguely around, still half conscious, then closed them again and remained inert.

"Come on now, Mother."

"How is it, Gran'ma?"

Slowly life surged back into the old woman. She looked from Charles to Mary and from Mary to George.

"I thought . . . that . . . er . . . I was going . . . to die . . . just now," she mumbled.

Then, suddenly, everything seemed to become clear to her. With her trembling skeleton hands she rubbed her eyes and all at once jerked down to her empty pocket. She fumbled nervously; then with eyes full of hatred she stared at her daughter-in-law who was still holding the medicine bottle in her hand.

Five minutes afterwards they were all at table again, busy with the lamb chops and the string beans which had got rather cold.

Translated by JOSEPH W. F. STOPPELMAN

Lodewijk van Deyssel

A NEW LITERATURE

IT IS MY OPINION THAT A GREAT ART IS NOW BEING BORN; I ENTERtain a strong hope that Holland will contribute some of the best elements to this art. And I shall proceed on my way and collaborate in order to vindicate my hope, but time and again I am hampered by the nasty things that obstruct the road.

I am thinking of Holland and of her art that I want to help create. The road is wide and is bathed in sunlight, but wherever I go I have to get past the filth that I see before me. I cannot escape it, as I at first thought. For when I say and shout that we Hollanders too must try to have a literature, there is an answering growl on all sides: "A literature? But we have one! An ancient one and a seventeenth-century one; the history of both has been written, in honor of both, festivals are held; our book-cases are full of the works representing both!" And that is just our shame and our misery.

The generation of literary men that preceded my generation falsified and spoilt the intellectual capacities of its readers, not only by telling them of old native literature and by dishing up as old native literature what was no literature, no art at all, but even by creating things themselves which they passed out as literature, in public everywhere. A certain number of citizens have had a great mass of sentences printed and distributed in Holland in the last fifty years, some rhyming and some not, contending that it was poetry and prose, although it had nothing to do with either poetry or prose except that it can be called a feeble parody thereof. They produced a pile of works that are obtainable everywhere in the bookshops, that are discussed in the newspapers, that are read and reflected upon and seriously and affectionately talked about by Dutch people. This is a situation that arouses annoyance and disgust. The whole life of the now official Netherlands literature is a constant insult to literature.

We therefore turn against the entire preceding generation of Dutch literary men, except Multatuli and Huet, for I too except them; Multatuli, a lyric artist on the strength of his humanity, Huet, no artist and no great critic, but the only sensible literary man in a whole company of stupid people. But as regards all

the rest, we shake off the hands they may place on our shoulders and kick them if they try to touch us and spit on their thoughts and pay no heed to their enthusiasm.

Foolish group of fifty-year-old infants, poor wretches of an age of decay, you who have never been stirred by a great feeling, lame and crooked, leaping in the skittish dances of your glassy souls, boring little fellows of A.D. 1, you loveless, hateless, brainless and heartless beings! You are absolutely nothing, you make no particle of difference; those who fight against you really fight against windmills, but I do not laugh at Don Quixote; we are just as indignant because you are nothing, for we want to destroy you, because you have turned our country into a barren moor, into the laughing-stock of other countries, into the "European China," and our literature into a slough of complacent stupidity, into a sewer of musty banality.

We want to push Holland high up, right into the momentum of the nations. I do not just say it "poetically"; I say it exactly as I mean it. As Greece once was, as Italy in the Renaissance, as we ourselves to a certain extent in the seventeenth century, that is how we want to make our little country. It grieves us always to hear foreigners speak of England, France and Germany; we want to create a splendor that will make their eyes shine with admiration; we want to make them kneel before the glorious-colored vapors rising from the watery land. For, by God, by God, there will be a passion and an intellectual tempest such as even the old in years have never yet seen. We are human beings, do you understand that, you dull-headed youngsters of the preceding generation, we are people with great, deep violent emotions; we shall write our souls on sheets of paper and they will be printed and published; and in all kinds of quiet rooms in narrow streets that you do not even know, we shall be read, and everywhere in the town and in the country admiration will be aroused, and there will be people at tables reading attentively with serious faces.

Then come to us, you herd of buffaloes of mediocrity; you are really no buffaloes, you are patch-work quilts hanging over horizontal bars, filled with the vacant wind of your "self-esteem." We shall take you and hang you up on the strings of our fooling. And there you will hang, sheets without life. Once in a while, when it is dark, we shall look upon you as ghosts, stored in the attics of our minds, but every time day will return and we shall see that we can be without fear.

But there is a festival going on in Netherlands literature; why

do I not enjoy myself, why do I not join in the general amenity, conviviality, amiability and merriment? There is always a festival in our literature, it is always kermess.

Yes, look at it, the foolish kermess of Holland's literary life with its congresses like waiters' meetings, its polished, soap-parson societies and associations! Do you see those waffle bakers with their sugary faces? They are our literary artists. Look indeed, they are licking from their fingers the greasy fat with which they have just been baking. Do you see those fat fritter-women? They are our poetesses and novelists. Take care, don't compliment them, for then they will become generous, and their fritters are not very digestible. Do you see all those booths with gaudy glass and tinsel decorations? They are the meeting halls where teachers and pupils drink healths to each other with the insipid lemonade and sugary cookies of their writings. Do you see those heyday merry-go-rounds? That, if you please, is our prose art. Jan ten Brink, the well-known commercial traveler, stands grinding the organ, Vosmaer and the rest are sitting in the little boats, each kissing his girl. Dirty barmaids are their sweethearts, their goddesses, indeed. That is how they go on turning. And then they stop for a moment. The bell rings! And then they go on. And so on, to infinity. There was one who sat on a lion quite alone looking in vain at the people round about for a girl that would please him. He sat gazing angrily at the spattering light and the monotonous jingling. He was sorry he also sat on the merry-go-round. Then the others threw him out because he looked so surly and was not at all jolly. Don't you find all this entertaining? Very entertaining, eh? Yes, I too find it all devilish entertaining.

And then again I don't find it entertaining; no, I find it enough to make one cry, to make one crazy, and I don't understand why it doesn't rain or storm to blot out the whole cursèd show-booth.

But I am not afraid. There will be someone who will pour his grief over this silly literature, who will put an end to all this amiability and crazy pleasure; there will certainly be one who will strike down all the crazy merry-go-rounds with the lightning of his wrath and his woe.

Away with you, out of my thoughts, university potentates who gnaw like mice at great memories or deck them with the bows and ribbons of your veneration, you who dissect corpses and fail to see the living life!

Away with you, little poets, who have minimized and destroyed

the strong feeling of men and turned the most beautiful sounds into dissonance in your mouths; now it is finished; you no longer belong to our land with your puppet conceit and silly words.

Away with you, you prose writers; the word was given unto you, and what have you done with it? You have murdered it, botched it into barren dumbness. It was in you, and you did not know. Which of you was a man and spoke up in the land? You puny of soul and puny of language, away, away with you!

Look, there they stand in groups, with their low foreheads, little figures round images of brass, in petty and sham veneration of petty dead; they assemble to eat and drink and laugh, chewing the while, at gruesome insipidness.

Listen, they are talking . . . about what? They are talking, talking about language and about literature. But what are their words? I no longer understand or grasp them. Dead words from dead mouths. No, they have never loved. These people are lunatics, ghosts, dead bodies. O gloomy, laughing corpses, let me whip you out of my thoughts, for the day of my life will be great with sharp clarity and burning heat, unblemished by your pettiness and unadulterated by your dead life!

For the great art has come to us. It has been born and pushed its way upward to the most glorious growth, to the greatest power of our time, to the highest life and the most splendid glory to which humanity has ever risen.

The world has had its prophets of the gods and witnesses of God, and age after age the nations have knelt before the powers that came from above the clouds. People have built upon reality; they have built a road past the palaces of dream and the temples of prayer; and high up on the towers they have seen things of beauty; but after the collapse of civilizations, after the tottering and submersion of the generations, after all the beautiful tempests of the tidal seas, we have been thrown onto the beach, we poor, naked people, alone with each other. And we have looked up; there was the sky, and in front of us, there was the water, and underneath us, there was the sand. And we thought and asked whether there was nothing, nothing. Then suddenly our eyes perceived one another, and in those eyes we saw unknown depths. We understood that we existed, we human beings; we live, with our wretchedness and our bliss.

After India, Egypt, Greece, finally after Rome, after all the great divine visions of our Germanic civilization, after Dante and Milton, after the great kneelers before the unconscious deity, after the idolizers of the Idea and the world-soul, after Goethe,

Shelley and Hugo, come we, witnesses of life, prophets of reality, passionately devoted to facts, enraptured by perception.

O human beings, if you have imagination and, sitting still, peering, in the middle of your loving thoughts, you once feel something coming from on high, twinkling and rustling, infinitely sweet and kind, a supreme delight, oh let that being into you, and look, look at our visions; there, nailed, glowing, to the pinnacle of your thoughts, come live in heaven, come, come and be blissful with us!

If you desire great joy, oh, listen to me. For in me there lives, like a dry, hoarsely rasping thirst, the eternal unquenchable desire. The great infinity, personified and worshipped by preceding peoples who built the earth full of houses the roofs of which point toward the pitiless sky, under whose vaults the burning sacrifices of enthusiasm and veneration climbed in twisting flames up the silent columns, that has enveloped human bodies in golden dream clouds so that they no longer saw each other or anything of all that was about them—this infinity which has raised the passions of mankind to the most glorious heights, which has poured over gasping heads the raging passion poems from the seething souls of the prophets, which in pure lines to the finest point has raised the towers of reason in the holy brains of the thinkers; this infinity has shivered through my consciousness and blown like a scorching wind over my gesticulating actions and through my aspiring thoughts and has remained in me like a kingdom of will, like a stupendous power of desire, to create beauty, to give life, to be capable of the impossible, to be one who, like none before, reached the topmost heights of humanity on the most hazardous journey and remained standing at the edge of madness with satisfied and sure eyes and with the white heat of contented love on his forehead.

What I have wanted is not in the world. I have sought it in the eyes of living people, I have sought it in the books of the dead, I have dreamt of tendernesses standing around me like golden shapes, intangible and alive with whispering, consoling voices and with soothing kisses for my poor grief.

I have sought right and left to catch it in the glances of my mother, to feel it in the smile of a woman, to hear it in the approaching step of a friend.

But then I turned into myself and remained alone with myself, and it descended from the high heaven into me, coming down like dew in shimmering garments of sweet ecstasy, rolling up in large gentle dreams and basking in glorious love.

For what has come streaming from the bowing plains of the ages, glowing from the great and golden passion of loving throngs of people, radiating from the infinite passion and the flaming desire of the few lonely great ones, what they all loved in beautiful gods, what some understood and suffered, has arisen in me to the strength of pure perception, to the power of the immaculate supreme word, for my god is my love and my world is in me. It has been born in clouds of long desire and gentle thoughts and risen slowly from my dark, raging youth, with flowery plains full of fiery colors of splendid passions and silent silvery meditations into the high dawn of the new day.

And the time has come to be introspective and still. The high word of great beauty is at hand. The living sounds ring of silver and crystal. They have spouted up from the sea and fallen sparkling from the skies of love-laughing light and like tears of color gathered up into shining nosegays and strung together into wide garlands of flowers. Because the sun has risen from the highest life, the golden glowing sun of pure love in the spacious heaven of my great day. For the wild watching night was great with the storming of rolling clouds and the whispering rustling of the blinking stars, but greater is the day with the universal light, my own day of white burning love with ages of hours rising heavily from compressed golden growth. For in me is life, and love is in me, and my day shall live, risen so gloriously in hotly burning sounds and hot living golden light.

Translated by Jo MAYO

PART II

REVIVAL IN FLANDERS

Cyriel Buysse

PEETJE THE PRUSSIAN

In 1870, at the outbreak of the war between France and Germany, the Prussian King Wilhelm was a somewhat unknown character in Flanders, at least in the countryside. The French Emperor, on the other hand, was known as the colored prints depicted him: the thick moustache, the heavy goatee, the dull, rather sad eyes, the brilliant uniform with golden epaulets and, crossing the chest, the wide, red ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

But as soon as the first, brutal battles had been won by the Germans, our land was flooded with pictures of the German generals and princes. Bismarck, Moltke, Prince Friedrich Karl, the Crown Prince, the King—their many portraits filled the illustrated magazines and people looked around for resemblances: this well-known, hardy peasant, from some distant hamlet looked somewhat like Bismarck—that old, bent-down little fellow from the poorhouse like Moltke, that commercial traveler, who every few weeks or so came to the village with his samples, like Prince Friedrich Karl . . . And so there was one in our small community, who was the spitting image of King Wilhelm.

There was a well-to-do retired gentleman who lived on the outskirts of the village with his wife and daughter in an impressive country home. I can still see it as it looked at the time: a high, white building, with a stucco front, beautiful shiny windows and lovely, light-pink Venetian blinds. A fresh, charming little garden, filled with sunny, brilliant colors, was divided into scrupulously tended small flowerbeds behind the iron fence with the gilt-topped spikes, along the street sides. Behind the house stretched a very large and beautiful pleasure garden, with magnificent old trees and velvety, undulating lawns.

He was just a plain, well-to-do retired gentleman. He bore the not unordinary name of Amedeus Fruytier. He liked good food and drink and he met his friends in the village taverns. Every day he read through a couple of newspapers from beginning to end.

He didn't take any part in politics, though he had definite political opinions and wasn't a member of the village council, though he knew exactly how the community should be run. He was very proud of the fact that he was completely independent and therefore stood above and outside of all parties.

"I," he would say, as he pompously inclined his sturdy figure backward, when people asked him why he, who was so rich and intelligent, did not want to concern himself with anything, "I eat my chicken and drink my bottle of wine comfortably at home and in so far as anything else is concerned I do not care a rap."

Neither was he definitely an unfeeling man. He could show himself roughly pleasant. He would then strike an attitude of gruffness and speak curtly, but it was often to hide a deeper emotion. Only he was vain, unbelievably, childishly vain.

When the war broke out he had immediately, definitely and sharply taken the French side. This at least he found it worthwhile to get excited about. "The Germans, bah! What a people! Not worth a damn! Not a sou! They will be beaten to a pulp!" He called them names at night in the tavern with his friends, who rarely dared to contradict him because he was the richest man in the village. And with a grin of satisfaction he would read to them his daily paper, the first news of the war that was favorable to the French. "Yes, but this is only the beginning! Now that the emperor, Louis Napoleon, is going to the battlefield things will change even more, now that he himself is leading the troops!"

He pronounced it "Louie Napoleon" and spoke of the French Emperor with familiarity, as though he knew him personally. Louie Napoleon would do this, Louie Napoleon would do that; Louie Napoleon had his plans all set, though they were known only to a few; and Mr. Fruytier made no secret of the fact that he belonged among those few privileged characters.

Then came the first, bitter blows: Weissenburg, Woerth, Froeschwiller; and our illustrated papers, which at first had shown nothing but the French portraits, were now filled with German pictures. That is how Mr. Fruytier saw the first time the likeness of King Wilhelm, and the resemblance to himself hit him at once, violently.

There was the same forbidding countenance, the surly eyes, the strong jaws, the grey, thick muttonchop whiskers, the heavy moustache. The chin of the Prussian monarch was then clean shaven—that was the only difference—and when Mr. Fruytier for a moment pushed the hair away from his chin and looked into the

mirror, the resemblance became so striking that he burst into vainglorious laughter at his own image. He went to his wife and daughter, laid the picture in front of them, pushed his beard away with his hand, gave them a forbidding look and asked:

"Don't you see the likeness?"

"Oh Lordy!" the mother and daughter cried out simultaneously, struck by the resemblance.

"Oh! If you were walking in France now!" They shivered.

"What! . . . What would they do!" he called out proudly, leaning backward.

"Why, shoot you of course!" Madame said with fear in her eyes.

"Bah! . . . do you think that King of Prussia would allow himself to be shot like a sparrow," he said deprecatingly.

That morning he went earlier than usual to his habitual *estaminet* to have his drop of liquor. His eyes were smiling with internal gaiety, his cheeks were red; he approached his friends, took the folded illustrated paper from his pocket, pushed his beard away from his chin and then let them look at the likeness, while he grinned, vain as a child:

"Hmm! Did you notice? My picture in the paper? Hmm? What do you say to that?"

"Oh! I'll be damned! How did you get in there?" the friends showed their surprise, each in turn comparing the picture with Mr. Fruytier's face.

"Hmm! What do you think? See the likeness," he repeated, swollen with pride. And then while shaking with laughter he suddenly unfolded the paper completely and showed them what it said underneath:

William I, King of Prussia.

"What! Peetje the Prussian! Is it the portrait of Peetje the Prussian?" his friends shrieked. "No, really, Mr. Fruytier, it looks as like you as two drops of water! If you shave the beard off your chin, everybody will think that you are Peetje the Prussian!"

From that moment there was a turn in the external political feelings of Mr. Fruytier.

Without actually giving up Louie Napoleon, who certainly was a fine fellow but who alas had a weak character and been dominated by bad influence, he began gradually to criticize and make fun of the French generals and the French army; and it did not take long for the sympathies of Mr. Fruytier (and of course those of his listening friends, who were subjected to the natural

influence of success) to be completely reversed. Continually he brought new papers, now all pro-German, and he grinned with pleasure at each new French defeat, because his predictions always came true. More and more he began to talk in a familiar tone about the German army, the German generals and also the Prussian King, whom he pretty soon seemed to know as intimately as he used to be acquainted with Louie Napoleon. Also he more and more began to bear a resemblance to the portraits of the German monarch. His stature became steadily and stiffly martial, his eyes looked forbidding, he was curt of speech, his voice was commanding and clipped; and it seemed too as if the hairs on his chin became shorter and more sparse, while at the same time his grey muttonchops grew broader. His friends noticed this and called his attention to it and with knowing smiles said:

"Damn it all! Mr. Fruytier, your beard is falling out. You're looking more and more like Peetje the Prussian!"

"Yes, do you really think so?" he said, childishly pleased in his vanity. But he knew it very well, just as he knew that everybody in the village now called him Peetje the Prussian. And he told them that he was afraid that there was something amiss with the hair on his chin. His beard sometimes hurt him there; it broke off, and fell out; he thought about consulting a specialist.

"You'd better shave it off, then it won't trouble you any longer," counselled his friends.

I still remember the sensation caused in the village, when Mr. Fruytier one morning, bent backward in his haughty pose, passed by on the street with a shaven chin. The people stood on their thresholds to look after him. I still can see him climbing the stoop of "The House of Commerce," then, turning slightly around to the people like a king, with a stately gesture, stroking his grey muttonchops, disappear into the tavern.

"Oh! Peetje the Prussian! Peetje the Prussian!" shouted the people. A strange shiver of respect and almost of fear went through the crowd.

That was on the day after the battle of Sedan! . . . He had the newspaper with the terrible news in his pocket; he produced it, solemnly unfolded it, and read it to his friends.

"We got there!" he said. "We caught Louie Napoleon! We must now advance in leisurely manner and within a fortnight we shall have put our hands on Paris."

The sensational news swelled to the proportion of a global dis-

aster that would also engulf us. Some people maintained that they heard the thunder of the cannon in the very heart of Flanders; they had felt the tremor of the earth, and in the evening the fear-haunted eyes of the villagers saw giant blood stains in the sky. There was talk of a hundred thousand dead and wounded; and whoever was not too frightened or too horrified, and who had courage and money for it made plans to see this horror of horrors at the very spot where it had occurred.

It goes without saying that Mr. Fruytier was one of the first. He announced it solemnly to his friends, that same night, in the *estaminet,* "The Golden Threshold," and announced excitedly to his wife and daughter when he came home:

"Pack my trunk; tomorrow I leave for Sedan!"

"Oh God, oh God; you don't really mean it!" the mother and daughter flew up startled.

"Don't I mean it! . . . Ha, you'll see!" he said with bravado.

They ran to him, barred his way and clung to his clothes, begging and sobbing.

"Oh no, dear husband; please don't, papa; please, please, please! Don't do it! They'll shoot you there!"

"Shoot me? I'll take my hunting rifle along!" he boasted.

"Oh no, dear husband; please don't go, papa, please, please, please!"

"Let me go!" he shrieked, suddenly furious, all excited and combative. "I must go there!"

"Oh, just wait a day or two, just a day, half a day!" his wife implored him. "Wait at least until tomorrow morning, until we have read what it says in the papers!"

After considerable argument back and forth he agreed to the latter. All right. He would wait until the following morning. But his bag had to be packed, and as soon as he had read the latest news in the papers he would go. He remained adamant; he must go there. He had solemnly promised it to all his friends at "The Golden Threshold."

Disconsolate, his wife and daughter went upstairs to pack his clothes, while he, feverish with excitement, took his hunting rifle from the hook on the wall and filled his bag with ammunition.

The next morning the newspapers were filled from beginning to end with tales of the terrible battle.

Even before breakfast Mr. Fruytier started to read aloud. His wife and daughter, who had not slept all night, were trembling

on their chairs. That lasted for hours, in ever-mounting, strained attention. Mr. Fruytier now and then took a hasty bite of bread and a swallow of coffee that had become ice cold. Anais, his daughter, gave now and then signs of fatigue and stared at the door as if she wanted to get up, but every time, her mother with severely knitted brows sent her an imperative glance to make her stay. It meant that much time gained. While he was reading he could not make any preparations for leaving.

At last, when the whole newspaper had been almost finished, Mr. Fruytier read the following sensational item:

"Thousands upon thousands of soldiers of the French army are continuously fleeing over the Belgian border. Many are wounded and all are in a most deplorable state of exhaustion and misery. They are immediately disarmed and are as quickly as possible directed by train to various places in the country. Last night three trains crowded to the limit departed to Liége, two to Namur, two to Brussels and two to Antwerp. Early tomorrow morning two will be sent to Ghent, where they probably will arrive between four and five in the afternoon."

Madame Fruytier suddenly had an inspiration:

"Oh, husband, let's go there all together to see for ourselves!"

Mr. Fruytier put his paper down and stared at his wife motionlessly over his glasses.

"And my trip to Sedan?" he said.

"What will you see there? Nothing any more! Of course, everything there has been closed off by the troops. Tomorrow, there will be much more to see in Ghent!" assured Madame Fruytier.

He hesitated for a moment. She felt that he hesitated.

"Let all of us go there, your friends too. They will also want to see it," she insisted.

There was a fair in Ghent.

The curious had come by the thousands, from all the regions of Flanders, to witness that unique spectacle: the arrival of the refugees and the wounded prisoners of war.

The square before the railroad station was black with people as well as all the streets surrounding it. Carriages could no longer pass through, the police had been crowded out, and only gendarmes on horseback succeeded in more or less maintaining order.

Mr. Fruytier stood in the front row, with his wife and daughter, at all moments pushed, crowded and hustled about. His chin was freshly shaved, his muttonchops stood forth, his eyes had a commanding glare, his figure stiffly bent backwards. He had not

doubted for a minute that his appearance alone would create an enormous sensation, but nobody paid particular attention to him, nobody seemed to be struck by the astounding resemblance, and Mr. Fruytier boiled inwardly. What kind of stupid people were they, that they did not notice somebody so striking! He felt humiliated and hurt in the presence of his friends, and he continuously blamed his wife and daughter for having prevented his going to Sedan.

"What is there here? What does it look like? There is nothing to see here!" he growled.

"Be patient, husband. Just have a bit of patience, papa," his wife and daughter implored. The daughter had come against her will and she was almost suffocating in the crowd.

It seemed endless, in the anxiously increasing hustle and bustle.

Then suddenly a wave seemed to sweep over the crowd, and something approached, preceded by a troop of gendarmes on horseback and framed to the right and the left by policemen with drawn sabers.

The French prisoners of war! . . .

Suddenly a solemn, deathly silence, instead of the seething mob. Everybody motionless, without crowding, nailed to the ground by respect and emotion, with wide-open eyes. Some people, on the station square, uncovered their heads, as before a funeral; and mechanically all hats were doffed.

There they came . . . ! Yellow, haggard faces, pale or darkly staring eyes; long, heavily hanging moustaches over unshaven, hollow, sunken cheeks. The red and blue uniforms were discolored and torn, rain-soaked and scorched; the epaulets hung down in rusty shreds; shakos were dented; the naked, dirty, stumbling feet burst forth from reddish-grey, gaping shoes. Arms were supported by dirty grey linen bandages; bloody cloths were wound around carved-up faces; and now and then, carried by four men, there passed on a stretcher a long and flat extended figure, its yellow face with closed eyes on the blue-and-white square pillow, powerless and motionless like a corpse.

The silence, the great, solemn, sudden immobility and stillness of the crowd was still the most impressive and moving thing of all. Those red, healthy faces of the onlookers, those well-fed, jolly fellows who lacked nothing were finally seeing from very close that which they had dreamed of for months and which had excited them; a picture out of the war! . . . This was what had now become, through hunger, through exhaustion, through cruelty, through blood, of all those human beings—their fellow mortals—

who did not know why they had fought and who were chased to their deaths like wild beasts! It was hell by its very torturing injustice, it was like the silent vengeance-shouting threat of the whole of humanity, like a dumb, gigantic attack, that, carried toward the sky, had been powerlessly crushed by a horrible fatality and again fallen down to earth in ruins.

"Oh God, oh God!" Madame Fruytier suddenly sobbed, clutching at her husband's arm.

"Shut up!" he shouted, "shut up!" shaking her off violently. And suddenly, overwhelmed by the spectacle, he could no longer hold himself back, and in the midst of his friends, who glared at him in dumb astonishment, he started to cry and sob like a child. . . .

Some weeks later Mr. Fruytier wore his full beard anew. His eyes had now a softer expression, his carriage was humbler, his words sounded calmer, quieter, without stern authority.

No longer did he look like Peetje the Prussian.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

Herman Teirlinck

LITTLE COUSIN

WHEN MISTER SERJANSZOON HEARD THAT HIS UNCLE SOOI PLANNED to spend a day with him, in the company of Petite Cousine, he went about town to buy some playthings for the child.

Though Mister Serjanszoon was by no means young any longer, he actually possessed an uncle who, though a few years his senior, had married a young widow of Antwerp some time before. This woman of wonderful beauty had a child that was lovely as the fresh, young day, and Mister Serjanszoon called her Petite Cousine, my little Cousin. Uncle Sooi's wife died soon after their marriage, but this was not as tragic as one would think at first sight. For she deceived her husband with an officer of the Green Lancers, on barrack days, and with a major domo of the Regents at all other times.

On a Wednesday, in the fullness of summer, Mister Serjanszoon received the tidings that Uncle Sooi was on the way to Paris

with Petite Cousine and would stop at his house on Thursday, to rest and enjoy himself. He was very pleased with this unexpected visit. He gave ample instructions to Filmene, the maid, and had a curious conversation with Huplinck, his cat, from which it appeared that he looked forward eagerly to coming events.

He walked around the town with joyful gait and in his thoughts made all sorts of plans which, barely conceived, dissolved into thin air. He had no idea what to buy for Petite Cousine; but it became a festival, which filled the near future like the atmosphere of a summer country fair with multicolored flags. He stood upon the threshold of ten shops in turn, and every time he thought the better of it, smiled innocently and moved on. The show-window of a doll shop brought him to a final decision. He entered.

He became very busy; he wished to see everything so as to make a good choice. He handled the wax puppets with their beautiful clothes of brocade and silk and satin. He nodded at the imperturbable little doll faces and soon enjoyed hugely this little world of clowns and marionettes. The shopkeeper, a fat little fellow with a good-natured face, displayed heavenly patience, and it really looked as if Mister Serjanszoon was greatly abusing this tolerance. He asked information on everything. That doll with her yellow curls over there, could she say Papa and Mama? He pulled the gilded string and listened repeatedly, and with joy, to the squeaky little voice. And that other one, could she sleep if one laid her down? Indeed, she could. He tried it out, for his own satisfaction. But the most beautiful of all was, he thought, a large doll with porcelain teeth. She smiled with them to warm your heart. He took the doll in his fingers and went over to the window, into the full light.

Carefully he turned her round and round, in the sunlight. She wore an evening gown after the French fashion, just like grand ladies, a jabot with genuine lace, and a frock of shining taffeta, sprinkled with moss roses, the color of light tea. Her tiny head was crowned with a high pouffe, and across it three purple pumpkins were fastened with blue ribbons. A beauty spot trembled on her left cheek.

And, Mister Serjanszoon asked, what can she do? She can do *something,* I hope?

The shopkeeper blushed with pride. Silently he took the doll, wound up a screechy spring with an invisible key and placed her upon the smooth counter. For a second she remained motionless, then she was moved by a small and jerky sort of life. She took a

few perky steps and, making a slow and most respectful bow, said, "Good day, ma'm, how do you do?"

She was a marvel. Mister Serjanszoon declared he would have no other doll, and his decision seemed so irrefutable that the funny little doll man never hesitated to double the price for so resolute an oldster, and as a remuneration for his own great servility. Without a murmur Mister Serjanszoon paid the price. He had the toy placed in a white cardboard box, and while the shopkeeper fastened a red string around it and talked, Mister Serjanszoon looked out into the sunlit street with satisfaction. And thus he saw the eager face of a poor child, pressed against the low window-panes, staring covetously at the feast of so many colors. He thought· You poor thing; your eyes filled with fire have seen the little lady's bow.

He felt unpleasantly moved and turned away. Fearing his feeling of pity, he thought of Petite Cousine, and although in his heart he recognized the rights of the other child, he completed without qualms the preparations for Petite Cousine's enjoyment.

Like a smile he entered his home, together with a ray of sunshine that lay in waiting across the front door till someone should open it. He spent the whole afternoon experimenting with the doll, and after supper Filmene, too, had to see and admire the lovely purchase.

Thursday was a beautiful day. At half-past ten in the morning a hired carriage halted in front of the garden gate, and Mister Serjanszoon himself crossed the hall and went out onto the high stoop where, in his violet house wrap, he waited in friendly fashion and with cheerful eyes. He saw how Filmene opened the carriage door and how she helped the old uncle with great care; he was, it seemed, suffering more than ever from gout. He jubilated softly: "Welcome . . . please be welcome. . . ."

Uncle Sooi was placed in the golden sunshine like a sagging bushel of clothes. But indescribable is the feeling that came over Mister Serjanszoon when shortly afterwards he saw a sweet lady hop out of the carriage. She wore a light traveling jacket, and her fluttering frocks blew across the most lovely little feet in the world. Her face shone like a peach warmed by the sun and her golden red hair, thick and curly, flowed richly from beneath a little hat with red primulas. She was Petite Cousine. Idiotically, Mister Serjanszoon murmured,

"That is Petite Cousine. . . ."

He was ashamed of his violet dressing gown. He felt ashamed of his entire ludicrous attitude. He felt ashamed of standing upon

the stoop like an ancient gout sufferer, incapable of receiving his guests and prevented by flannel, baize or duffel from being gallant. His situation grew completely unbearable when Petite Cousine came gaily tripping along and made the round of the pond in which the clear hues of her robe were reflected in quickly succeeding colors. She called out:

"Oh, cousin . . . how quiet you look . . . !"

She could have said nothing worse. To Mister Serjanszoon the word "quiet" was a palliative, the politeness of which hindered him like the pronouncing of names. He smiled none the less, to hide his disappointment, and opened his arms, as Petite Cousine had fallen around his neck with sweet rustling of her clothes.

During dinner, which was served on the sunny porch next to the dining-room, he could not withstand his desire to hear something about the age of that incredibly beautiful girl. Uncle Sooi allowed her seventeen Mays, and to these—meticulous as he was—he added three months and eleven days. Silently Mister Serjanszoon stared at the blue glycine-bells which jingled over the woodwork of the porch, between the green foliage and the golden skies, and then he remembered that six years had gone by since he had visited Uncle Sooi at Antwerp. He had not expected Petite Cousine to grow like this, like a young filly in the meadow. Thus he said:

"My child, the days have passed me by. I have stayed behind with a little girl, fair of curls and playful. . . . It is the past. *I* am the past, I know it well. Be merciful and allow me to enjoy in abundance what the summer brings to me: flowers sprung from their buds and a young woman, born from the fairy tales of Time. I thank this magician, though already he silvers my head with dangerous threads and compresses my future more and more in the wrinkles of my face. Will you have some more olives, Petite Cousine?"

"Merci-merci, mon cousin."

Mister Serjanszoon did not mention the doll. He was too busy holding a conversation he had not expected and he was, moreover, obliged to show some interest in his uncle's gout. Uncle often busied himself describing diseases and medicines and advising his cousin to beware of both. Mister Serjanszoon accepted the advice with great patience and now and again glanced at Petite Cousine as if to say: "Ha ha . . . there's plenty of time before we shall have to worry about old men's diseases. . . ."

And every moment he felt anew that so young an outlook on life did not harmonize with the quiet homeliness of his purple

dressing gown. The dessert brought him the idea of an outing.

"Brabant," he said, "is the land of fine verdure. You must not leave it again without having seen the picture of all that tender and varying green, tones of great clarity interwoven with the intelligence of the most perfect symphonies. The weather is lovely. The light is excellent, and I know some walks that are delicious."

The hint was taken, but Uncle Sooi—who was toying with some sugared plums on a silver platter—declared that he would not come along but would be quite happy to stay at home. He had some letters to write and to fasten a mustard plaster somewhere which he could well do with Filmene's assistance. Mister Serjanszoon insisted that he should come along on the ride, but Petite Cousine said,

"Leave him . . . He won't come anyhow. He is so soon exhausted. . . . Poor papa. . . ."

She laughed, threw the brown husk of a hazel-nut over Uncle Sooi's head and suddenly announced her intention to sing. This led, first of all, to a quick conversation, in which Mister Serjanszoon learned that Petite Cousine was really on the way to Paris with very definite ideas. It gave him an involuntary shock to hear that there she was going to study in the conservatory, under the musical leadership of a certain Señor Alvarez, and that Uncle Sooi completely agreed with this plan.

Later, however, when Petite Cousine was seated in the salon, before the clavichord and sang a song so that the air seemed filled with the flutterings of crystal birds, he understood that her decision was not a rash one and he even felt inclined to congratulate her with her strange prospects. He leaned back in his reed chair and listened with pleasure, his head filled with a world of sounds that whirled around and sometimes twinkled, like a display of trickling pearls. The clavichord possessed rare sounds and adorned with carefully selected and brittle twanging of strings the suspended tones of Petite Cousine's voice.

Later he stood next to Petite Cousine, to turn the pages of her music. And so, close to her, he softly inhaled the delicious perfume of tuberoses which arose from her red-gold locks. She sang a short, tinkling aria from Mozart's "Magic Flute";—the sultry salon, heavy with its tapestries and curtains, was suddenly endowed with the light life of a strange musical box around the gilt and lacquered panels of the clavichord. It intoxicated Mister Serjanszoon, and the broad panels of his long dressing gown trembled against his calves.

"Petite Cousine," he whispered, "you bring into my quiet house a light full of wonders. Your song is like the blinding rays of a many-branched chandelier, set with strings of diamonds and hung with mirrors of emeralds and rubies. Truly you bewitch the air you breathe, and it seems to me as if you are the rosy goddess who, arisen from the abyss of the green-dark ocean, sprays the clear azure with sweet-sounding bells of foam."

She was suddenly silent and looked up at him, astonished. She saw his good-hearted smile and solemnly she arose, to walk slowly to the porch. There she turned around with a quizzical glance; mysteriously she laid a finger across her lips and with her other hand pointed at Uncle Sooi who nodded and slept where he was sitting.

Of this opportunity Mister Serjanszoon made good use to escape to his bedroom so as to exchange his ludicrous violet gown for something more adequate. He rummaged through all his closets and drawers, searched for his best clothes and made much of color harmony when it came to the choice of ties, a flowered waistcoat and socks. Finally, he stood before the high and narrow cheval-glass in gorgeous attire, and addressed himself in a neat little speech.

"Ha ha," he said, stretching out his arms and shaking the lace cuffs of his shirt that peeped from his black-purple sleeves. "Of what caprice of whimsical fate are you, dear sir, the victim? What do you intend to do, now that you are standing here like a Sunday child, your hands full of the richest favors and loaded with the luxuries of blind fortune? I understand, dear sir: you are out to deceive yourself concerning your own principles. You search for an excuse for your difficult confession and a hiding place for your roguish plans. But I tell you, dear sir, you are searching in vain, in vain!"

Mister Serjanszoon became truly arrogant and puffed out his chest. His eyes were shining.

"Sir," he resumed, "you must restrain your egotism and temper the decisions of a philosophy which in later days will prove insufficient to calm your conscience. Remember that the present moment is not everything. Fear that the shadows of a doubtful past will lie broadly across the days which are still to come. Be afraid of yourself in the future, dear sir. . . . The girl is very beautiful. She may be admired with respect; do not forget that. Are you going to abuse the confidence of a defenseless uncle? He has no idea of the recklessness of your desires and he entrusts to your instincts—which he believes honorable—the innocence of a young

woman, still a child, the lovely fruit of a careful education. Shame on you, sir, if in your secret thoughts you intend to betray the peace of a graybeard and the guilelessness of a virgin."

Extremely satisfied with the tenor of these admonitions he left the room, to display his splendor on the porch.

Mister Serjanszoon sat next to his cousin in the tilbury borrowed of Mr. Daubrecourt-Sart, his friend. Petite Cousine, in the bright sunlight, was the picture of health. She held the reins herself, and the orange-clad groom, on a lower seat with his back towards them, seemed to hang out of the carriage. The daylight glittered powerfully on his brass buttons and on the gold embroidery of his cocked livery hat. He did not speak, he did not move, he did not breathe; he seemed to be a quiescent object of possible usefulness.

None the less, Mister Serjanszoon conversed very cautiously with Petite Cousine, on the rhythm of the jolting wheels and the veering of the springs. He was a guide to her, pointing out the beauty spots of the landscape that stretched away in the abundance of the summer day. He waved slowly with his yellow-clad hands or held the gold knob of his cane over the shining back of the dark-brown horse. They drove to Zeven-Born, via Stalle, Dworp and Rode. Petite Cousine, very dashing on the little box, held the taut reins firmly and at times made the whip whizz lightly through the air.

In Verrewinkel valley Mister Serjanszoon made a peculiar suggestion: the carriage was to be left for a while with the orange groom and the forest of Verrewinkel was to be traversed on foot. Enumerating the excellent reasons supporting his proposal, Mister Serjanszoon was uncertain and shy, and his uneasiness increased when Petite Cousine, suddenly halting the horse, looked at him long and inquiringly. She did not speak but her straight glances continued to stab against his hesitating forehead.

"Indeed, cousin," she said at last, "you are right. Nous ferons à pied le promenade. . . ."

And they went.

The valley was wild and lay bathed in powdery sunshine. The light flowed as the finest dust; like a blue haze it milled around the tops of the trees and settled upon the gray-green meadows like a lazy streamlet. Along the road the silvery, capricious babbling of the Merel Brook was clearly audible, and one could well imagine her firm voice where she struck rocks and heavy tree roots.

Until they reached the entrance of the forest Mr. Serjanszoon

remained silent, in shamed meditation. Under the first beech-tree, however, he stopped still, took Petite Cousine's hand and, embracing the entire valley with a beautiful gesture of his eyes and arms, he said,

"You see, my child, this is a picture of our lovely Brabant. How the valley cradle rocks! How truly it possesses an extraordinary cadence within its living loins, and how subtle this movement is. When I see such a spectacle I think of those wonderful German dances in three-quarter time and one accent. That accent throbs in the distance, all along, from beginning to end of every bar, and on it balances a lithe little song, moving softly and bright of tone. Such is the valley in its colors and its being—a waltz of lines and of melodious hues. . . . I am sorry, Petite Cousine, that I cannot express myself better."

They penetrated into the greenly glowing forest. The ancient trees lifted knotty roots from the moss-covered soil and their heavy trunks reached solemnly out towards the lilting dome of boughs and leaves. Here the day had a quieter appearance and the sun, tamed by the foliage, shone upon those rustling giants with a mauve light that seemed to penetrate both objects and beings and turn into an independent, quietly active life. The deep forest glowed green and strangely. It was filled with indefinite sounds that sometimes resembled a faraway choir of human voices.

Petite Cousine said,

"I feel so afraid here, so insignificant. . . ."

Strange vegetation arose on every side, motionless and mysterious. Unusual animals were hidden in the bush.

"Petite Cousine," said Mr. Serjanszoon, "this is a temple full of mysteries and I am not surprised that you feel oppressed. The great practices of nature always frighten, because we little humans, my child, have remodeled nature with our hands and by the means of a conceited art. We have estranged our minds from her, to use it for supernatural purposes. We cannot, therefore, love her any more or respect her. And now she terrifies us as a mother is certain to frighten the children who have forsaken her. In the forest, Petite Cousine, lives the mystery of nature, and nothing can disturb it in its church of silence, so that at once we are merely frightened strangers. Look, a heavy power of love hangs in space! The ferns spread their finely laced leaves and form bouquets in the moss; the smaller vegetation parasites below, and everywhere flowers spring up, the tokens of a lovable ecstasy. Do you hear how under secret domes the ripe seed trickles

hither and thither from dry calices? The ivy climbs along the somber columns of this temple of burning sighs and loving delight. But above and below, on the ground and in the tree tops, what teeming life, how splendid a joust of the desires, how mighty a love play is in progress!

"The finches, hedge sparrows and marsh titmice, the robin red breasts, orioles and kinglets—all these little folk, sharp of beak and light of wing, all those warblers of the forest, these jumpers and twig-dancers, with their caroling and whistling . . . do you hear them quarrel and titter, do you hear them proclaim their lusts, each in his own manner, filled with desire and intoxicated with life's abundance? Shortly they will be tired or satisfied, and then, in the peaceful afternoon, arises the duet of two love-lorn blackbirds. Shortly the velvet evening will fall and then the cuckoo, with mysterious double tones, will blow the tattoo for the day. Shortly, Petite Cousine, the stars of night will peep through the richness of the foliage and then, in the stillness around, the High Priest of the magic wood-palace will speak—the nightingale with his crystal tongue and his sweet-voiced poetry. The eyes of the brown owl will shine chimerically, as he sits upon his throne of oak and listens with devotion. And grand, slowly moving, the wind will weave through the dark halls, puffing without wrath his invisible cheeks. . . . Ha . . . Petite Cousine, it is, I assure you, a stirring ceremony.

"But more, more movement, more life is active on every hand. Three squirrels skittle across the branches, jump into space and try to grasp one another's tails. A badger lazies between two hazel-bushes and, in his mind, thinks of some little love story, of no importance to us, but eagerly expected by him. A field-mouse couple sits under a low beech-tree and lovingly rub their muzzles together. What are they saying, Petite Cousine? A whip-poor-will waits in the dusk and in the mirror of a quieted pool makes sure of the gracefulness of his form and the perfection of his summer toilet. Moths and black-shielded drones whirr through the air. Strange spiders brood in brittle webs of most extraordinary rendezvous. Six beetles form a circle and count and count, before they take to the wing. There is a terrible battle in the offing between armies of ants, gnats, worms and scorpions, while a monstrous insect with a brown hood and the timorous eyes of a plagiarist, stands on a little hill and, a wooden monk alike, reads an unthinkable prayer. . . . And that, Petite Cousine, is the awful mystery from which humanity has become estranged. That is the glorious happiness-in-love which men have run away from,

like ludicrous fanatics, on the shaking ribs of the Rosinante of a so-called science. And you, my sweet child, are afraid of the dizzying truth of that only happiness because already you have turned your face toward the sad lie of human society. . . . But let us walk, my dearest, and give me your hand."

She did this willingly and now they walked like happy children, their encradled hands dandling up and down with every double step. They hardly spoke any more. Sometimes Mister Serjanszoon gazed long into the radiant face of the young girl, and while they walked an inexplicable feeling oppressed his heart and made his cheeks throb with fever.

"Are you not tired, Petite Cousine," he asked. "Will you not rest for a while?"

"No, mon cousin," she said, quietly and falteringly, and she was afraid that he would insist.

It grew brighter. They were nearing the end of the forest and already they could feel the full splash of the glaring sun. Petite Cousine looked at the open country nearby. Among the tree trunks the golden light of day showed in slanting patterns. Spatters of strong sunbeams flashed fiercely in front. Petite Cousine began to hurry and Mister Serjanszoon became aware that she would like to take her hand out of his. At the edge of the wood she stood still, breathed heavily and seemed filled with unusual anxiety. She blushed deeply.

There, in the gorgeous fire of the summer day, lay the wide landscape of Zeven-Born, the three domed hills crowned with dark fir-trees, the seven pools like seven eyes of a gigantic monster head, the yellow sandy patches and the dirt roads, the rows of poplars and the variety of bushes.

"That is Zeven-Born," Mister Serjanszoon resumed. "This, my child, is the true face of Brabant. Do you notice the fine color nuances, those hundreds of greens and yet *one* green, modulating lithely in a thousand silky shimmerings? Here, Petite Cousine, I have so often watched the battles of Whitebeard-Winter and the golden-locked Lord of Summer! . . . Sit on this soft ledge of the road and quiet the frightened fluttering of your large eyes. Are you afraid? Let me tell you of Zeven-Born."

They both sat down, and the grass was tepid. At a little distance a grasshopper chirped excitedly.

"See how the splendid Lord of Summer now rules the land! You feel the peace of his victory, and in his richness he grows over-lavish. But soon, within a few weeks, the heralds of Whitebeard-Winter will arrive. They will blow their brass trumpets,

and the sound will roar across the fields and villages like a storm. Frightened, the swallows will gather over the seven pools, chirping and turning and tossing until, in the wild storm-winds, they will change into a cloud of moving pinpoints.

" 'Hi,' shouts the Lord of Summer, 'it avails thee not to blow thy trumpets, for it will all be in vain. Thy noise can only frighten the birds. . . .' And he sees the cloud of swallows move toward the south and merely shrugs his shoulders. But the pools of Zeven-Born grow dark. He himself, stunned by the hellish trumpet blowing, feels how his eyes grow clouded and each night he goes to rest at an earlier hour. Then the animals, the plants and the waters complain; a great sigh is heaved by the earth itself. The Lord of Summer says, 'Fear not should I sleep a little longer for I shall hang the light across the tree tops. . . .' And he does hang the golden light above the trees, that turn into palaces of the noblest metal, and shine.

" 'Zu . . . e . . . u . . . e . . . ue . . .,' the trumpeters blow; they roam across the forests, shaking the treetops and biting into the foliage with much noise. Space is filled with dying leaves, the storm swishes golden boughs athwart the skies. And then, Petite Cousine, the rain men come. They spread their wet sleeves all over the heavens and empty their vats. The Lord of Summer is drunk with conceit. The grapes from his vineyards he presses out into his mouth, and he winks. 'Never mind . . .,' he says lazily, 'it's bombast, all of it . . . it's idle . . ., idle. . . .' But far away you can already hear the jingling of Whitebeard-Winter's harness. In carriages of the most beautiful purple the bewitched Lord of Summer spreads out his illusions and dozes while, on a wagon made of snow, the mighty enemy makes his entry. He wins with ease, and next morning there is a crust of ice upon the seven pools of Zeven-Born."

In that moment Mister Serjanszoon truly thought that he had witnessed all this, and it was not difficult for Petite Cousine to believe him. She looked out across the summery land.

"For months he rules like this, Petite Cousine," Mister Serjanszoon resumed, "till at a certain moment the disillusioned Lord of Summer comes to his senses. Now the struggle is cruel, for regrets sharpen the fury of the Summer Lord and fear doubles the prowess of Whitebeard-Winter. In March, by way of declaration of war, the Lord of Summer hangs out the silver flags of Spring and the stuffy mantle of snow below which the earth is choking, melts away. 'That shall not be!' Whitebeard shouts; he packs the cold clouds tighter together and rattling hailstorms come slant-

ing down to earth. Once more the horrified heralds blow upon their trumpets, they storm the land again and shatter the meekly waiting verdure. Whatever they do, Summer, with quiet force, warms their breath. Buds swell upon the tree limbs and a curious movement stirs the water of the creeks.

" 'Damnation!' the Winter swears exhaustedly, 'you are a coward, youngster! You shoot from afar. Hurrah . . . we shall not die without revenge.' He exerts himself tremendously, jumps across the fields, his chilly harness rattling and from his hands, in widest sweep, burst forth the terrifying hurricanes. The light of heaven is dimmed; it seems as if the Winter will after all be victorious. A relentless hailstorm clatters upon his back. . . . But, zoom . . . a golden sword tears through the tightly packed clouds and plants its hot fire in the land. A long-drawn wail sounds from the wet horizon and on wheels of slowly dying thunder the broken carriage of Winter runs to the smithy of the North where eight months will be needed for its repair. Smilingly the mighty Lord of Summer sits on his throne of Light, and sweet virgins stretch out against the bright, clear skies the fluttering azure flag of peace, in token of his conquest. Ha! now the trees grow green and the primroses peal their bells. Now the clover nods and the rose sends out her sweet perfume. Now a young people jubilates and their limbs are intertwined in love's sweet gestures—now, Petite Cousine, the swift swallows return from their foreign country of exile."

He was silent, mused a moment and then he whispered slowly,

"It happens there, around the pools of Zeven-Born. The frogs will tell you of it, and as sure as I speak to you, my child, as certain have I seen it and watched it with my own eyes. . . ."

Petite Cousine did not answer. She had trembled and her nostrils quivered slightly. Then she closed her lovely lashes halfway, fell back and her head rested against Mister Serjanszoon's cheek. Tenderly his arm surrounded her and a warm glow brought tears to his eyes. Knowing no more, and thinking no longer, he bent over her and kissed Petite Cousine on her mouth.

"Oh heavens," he whispered in her hair. "Petite Cousine . . . Petite Cousine. . . ."

And Petite Cousine, against his mouth and with both her hands upon his chest, said,

"You are very good . . . you are a poet. . . . Next to you I am so very small. . . ."

"Petite Cousine! Petite Cousine! . . ."

He caressed her, became strangely excited and trembled with emotion.

The eyes of Petite Cousine shivered with green rays of fire. It seemed to Mister Serjanszoon that she arose far above the earth and lived in regions of sublimity. She was in ecstasy. She said,

"Now to flee from here. Now to run across the fields, to foreign lands, and to go on . . ., go on . . ., only to live and to go on. . . ."

He hardly recognized her voice. He trembled, did not know where to hold the porcelain bowl of chance. To gain time he clung to her words and chanted after her rapturously,

"To go on . . . oh, to go on, Petite Cousine. . . . Do you know the wonderful intoxication of those trips through the unknown? To march in clothes of freedom, sowing dreams along the roads! . . . To glance into the suns of the Future, hand in hand, on the rhythm of our united hearts and driven by the fever of our blood, Petite Cousine. . . . To go, go, without end, away from all men and their miserable eloquence. . . ."

He felt her breath and the fragrance of tuberoses bewitched his senses. He felt her soft little hand. He felt the mad desire of her flaming lips. . . .

"Ah . . .," stammered Petite Cousine. "I love you . . ., I love you so. . . ."

And he also felt that a scintillating porcelain bowl (what could it be, what could it be? . . .) tired of offering its contents, dissolved its wine-moist edges into mist. . . .

They descended into the valley, found the orange groom and the light tilbury and returned home. Uncle Sooi, in a thousand fears, stood awaiting them and wondered whether the stage coach would meantime have left.

Petite Cousine departed as she had come. She gave her hand to Mister Serjanszoon and with her rosy thumb she lightly flicked his nose. Blithely she laughed in his face, and her parting words were,

"God, weren't we stupid. . . ."

And so she left Mister Serjanszoon behind in his garden, looking down upon his age; and the good man, having driven from his thoughts the picture of a certain Señor Alvarez, began to think of a poor little girl he had seen somewhere, her nose plastered against a show-window, and to whom he wished to present a wonderful doll.

Translated by JOSEPH W. F. STOPPELMAN

Stijn Streuvels

THE END

ZEEN PULLED UP HIS BENT BACK, WIPED THE SWEAT FROM HIS FOREhead with his bare arm and drew a short breath.

Zalia, with her head close to the ground, went on binding her sheaves.

The sun was blazing.

After a while, Zeen took up his sickle again and went on cutting down the corn. With short, even strokes, with a swing of his arm, the sickle rose and with a "d-zin-n-n" fell at the foot of the cornstalks and brought them down in great armfuls. Then they were hooked away and dragged back in little even heaps, ready to be bound up.

It did not last long: he stopped again, looked round over all that power of corn which still had to be cut and beyond, over that swarming plain, which lay scorching, so hugely far, under that merciless sun. He saw Zalia look askant because he did not go on working and, to account for his resting, drew his whetstone from his trouser-pocket and began slowly to sharpen the sickle.

"Zalia, it's so hot."

"Yes, it's that," said Zalia.

He worked on again, but slowly, very slackly.

The sweat ran in great drops down his body; and sometimes he felt as if he would tumble head foremost into the corn. Zalia heard his breath come short and fast; she looked at him and asked what was the matter. His arms dropped feebly to his sides; and the hook and sickle fell from his hands.

"Zalia, I don't know . . . but something's catching my breath like; and my eyes are dim. . . ."

"It's the heat, Zeen, it'll wear off. Take a pull."

She fetched the bottle of gin from the grass edge of the field, poured a sip down his throat and stood looking to see how it worked:

"Well?"

Zeen did not answer, but stood there shivering and staring, with his eyes fixed on a bluebonnet in the cut corn.

"Come, come, Zeen, get it done! Have just another try: it'll get cooler directly and we'll be finished before dark."

"Oh, Zalia, it's so awfully hot here and it'll be long before it's evening!"

"But, Zeen, what do you feel?"

Zeen made no movement.

"Are you ill?"

"Yes, I am, Zalia. No, not ill, but I feel so queer and I think I ought to go home."

Zalia did not know what to do: she was frightened and did not understand his funny talk.

"If you're ill . . . if you can't go on, you'd better get home quick: you're standing there like a booby."

Zeen left his sickle on the ground and went straight off the field. She saw him go slowly, the poor old soul, lurching like a drunken man, and disappear behind the trees. Then she took her straw-band and bundled up all the little heaps of corn, one after the other, and bound them into sheaves. She next took the sickle and the hook and just went cutting away like a man: stubbornly, steadily, with a frenzied determination to get it done. The more the corn fell, the quicker she made the sickle whizz.

The sweat ran down her face; now and then, she jogged back the straw hat from over her eyes to see how much was left standing and then went on cutting, on and on. She panted in the doing of it. . . . She was there alone, on that outstretched field, in that heat which weighed upon her like a heavy load; it was stifling. She heard no sound besides the swish of her steel and the rustling of the falling corn.

When at last she could go on no longer, she took a sip at the bottle and got new strength.

The sun was low in the sky when she stood there alone on the smooth field, with all the corn lying flat at her feet. Then she started binding.

The air grew cooler. When the last sheaf was fastened in its straw-band and they now stood set up in heavy stooks, like black giants in straight rows, it began to grow dark. She wiped the sweat from her face, slipped on her blue striped jacket, put the bottle in her hat, took the sickle and hook on her shoulder and, before going, stood for a while looking at her work. She could now see so very far across that close-shorn plain; she stood there so alone, so tall in that stubble-field, everything lay so flat and, far away over there, the trees stood black and that mill and the fellow walking there: all as though drawn with ink on the sky. It seemed to her as if the summer was now past and that heavy

sultriness was a last cramped sigh before the coming of the short days and the cold.

She went home. Zeen was ill and it was so strange to be going back without him. It was all so dreary, so dim and deadly, so awful. Along the edge of the deep sunken path the grasshoppers chirped here and there, all around her: an endless chirping on every side, all over the grass and the field; and it went like a gentle woof of voices softly singing. This singing at last began to chatter in her ears and it became a whining rustle, a deafening tumult and a painful laughter. From behind the pollard her cat jumped on to the path: it had come to the field to meet her and, purring cosily, was now arching its back and loitering between Zalia's legs until she stroked it; then it ran home before her with great bounds. The goat, hearing steps approach, put its head over the stable-door and began to bleat.

The house-door was open; as she went in, Zalia saw not a thing before her eyes, but she heard something creaking on the floor. It was Zeen, trying to scramble to his feet when he heard her come in.

"Zeen!" she cried.

"Yes," moaned Zeen.

"How are you? No better yet? Where are you? . . . Why are you lying flat on the floor like this?"

"Zalia, I'm so ill . . . my stomach and . . ."

"You've never been ill yet, Zeen! It won't be anything this time."

"I'm ill now, Zalia."

"Wait, I'll get a light. Why aren't you in bed?"

"In bed, in bed . . . then it'll be for good, Zalia; I'm afraid of my bed."

She felt along the ceiling for the lamp, then in the corner of the hearth for the tinder-box; she struck fire and lit up.

Zeen looked pale, yellow, deathlike. Zalia was startled by it, but, to comfort him:

"It'll be nothing, Zeen," she said. "I'll give you a little Haarlem oil."

She pulled him on to a chair, fetched the little bottle, put a few drops into a bowl of milk and poured it down his throat.

"Is it doing you good?"

And Zeen, to say something, said:

"Yes, it is, Zalia, but I'd like to go to sleep, I'm feeling cold now and I've got needles sticking into my side . . . here, see?"

And he pressed both his hands on the place.

"Yes, you're better in bed; it'll be gone in the morning and we'll fetch in the corn."

"Is it cut?"

"All done and stooked; if it keeps fine tomorrow, we'll get it all into the barn."

Zalia lifted him under his armpits and they crawled on like that into the other room, where the loom stood with the bed behind it. She helped him take off his jacket and trousers and put him to bed, tucked him nicely under the blanket and put his night-cap on his head.

Then she went and lit the fire in the hearth, hung up the pot with the goat's food, washed the potatoes and sat down to peel them for supper.

She had not peeled three, when she heard Zeen bringing up.

"That's the oil, it'll do him good," she thought and, fetching a can of water from outside, gave him a bowl to drink.

Then she went back to her peeling. A bit later, she sat thinking of other remedies—limeflowers, sunflower-seeds, pearl barley, flowers of sulphur—when suddenly she saw Mite Kornelje go by. She ran out and called:

"Mite!"

"What is it, Zalia?"

"Mite, Zeen is ill."

"What, ill? All at once?"

"Yes, all of a sudden, cutting the corn in the field."

"Is he bad?"

"I don't know, I've given him some Haarlem oil, he's been sick; he's complaining of pains in his side and in his stomach; he's very pale: you wouldn't know him."

They went indoors. Zalia took the lamp and both passed in, between the loom and the wall by Zeen's bed.

He lay staring at the ceiling and catching his breath. Mite stood looking at him.

"You must give him some English salt,[1] Zalia."

"Why, Mite, I never thought of that; yes, he must have some English salt."

And she climbed on to a chair and took from the plank above the bed a dusty calabash full of little paper bags and packets.

She opened them one by one and found canary-seed, blacklead, washing-blue, powdered cloves, cinnamon, sugar-candy, burnt-ash . . . but no English salt.

"I'll run home and fetch some, Zalia."

[1] Epsom salts.

"Yes, Mite, do."

And Mite went off.

"Well, Zeen, no better yet?"

Zeen did not answer. She took a pail of water and a cloth, cleaned away the mess from beside the bed and then went back to peel her potatoes.

Mite came back with the English salt. Treze Wizeur and Stanse Zegers, who had heard the news, also came to see how Zeen was getting on. Mite stirred a handful of the salt in a bowl of water and they all four went to the sick man's bed. Zeen swallowed the draught without blinking. Mite knew of other remedies, Stanse knew of some too and Treze of many more: they asked Zeen questions and babbled to him, made him put out his tongue and felt his pulse, cried out at his gasping for breath and his pale color and his dilated pupils and his burning fever. Zeen did not stir and lay looking at the ceiling. When he was tired of the noise, he said:

"Leave me alone."

And he turned his face to the wall.

Then they all went back to the kitchen. The goat's food was done. Zalia hung the kettle with water on the hook and made coffee; and the four women sat round the table telling one another stories of illness. In the other room there was no sound.

A bit later, Mite's little girl came to see where mother was all this time. She was given a lump of sugar and sat down by her mother.

"Zalia, have you only one lamp?" asked Treze.

"That's all, Treze, but I have the candle."

"What candle?"

"The blessed candle."

"We've not come to that yet: it's only that Zeen has to lie in the dark like this and we have to go to and fro with the lamp to look at him."

"Zeen would rather lie in the dark."

"I'll tell you what: Fietje shall run home and fetch something, won't you, Fietje? And say that mother is going to stay here because Zeen is dying."

Fietje went off. The coffee was ready and when they had gulped down their first bowl, they went to have another look in the room where the sick man lay.

Zeen was worse.

"We must sit up with him," said Stanse.

"For sure," said Treze. "I'll go and tell my man: I'll be back at once."

"Tell Free as you're passing that I'm staying here too," said Stanse.

"We must eat, for all that," said Zalia; and she hung the potatoes over the fire.

Then she went to milk the goat and take it its food. It was bright as day outside and quiet, so very quiet, with still some of the heat of the sun lingering in the air, which weighed sultrily. She crept into the dark goat-house, put down the pot with the food and started milking.

"Betje, Betje, Zeen is so ill; Zeen may be dying, Betje!"

She always clacked to her goat like that. Two streams of milk came clattering in turns into the little pail.

People came: Treze and Mite's little girl, with a lantern, and Barbara Dekkers, who had also come to have a look.

"I'm here," said Zalia, "I've done, I'm coming at once."

They stood talking a bit outside in the moonlight and then went in.

"Perhaps my man'll come on," said Treze. "A man is better than three women in illness; and Virginie's coming too: I've been to tell her."

"Well, well," said Barbara, "who'd ever have thought it of Zeen!"

"Yes, friends, and never been ill in his life; and he turned seventy."

Stanse mashed the potatoes; Zalia poured a dram of milk over them and hung them over the fire again.

"Have you all had your suppers?" she asked.

"Yes," said Treze and Barbara and Mite.

"I haven't," said Stanse.

Zalia turned the steaming potato-mash into an earthen porringer and she and Stanse sat down to it. The others drank a fresh bowl of coffee.

They were silent.

The door opened and from behind the screen came a great big fellow with a black beard:

"What's up here? A whole gathering of people: is it harvest-treat today, Zalia? Why, here's Barbara and Mite and . . ."

"Warten, Zeen is ill."

"Zeen? . . . Ill?"

"Yes, ill, man, and we're sitting up."

Warten opened wide eyes, flung the box which he carried over

his shoulder by a leather strap to the ground and sat down on it:

"Ha! So Zeen's ill . . . he's not one of the youngest either."

"Seventy-five."

They were silent. The womenfolk drank their coffee. Warten fished out a pipe and tobacco from under his blue smock and sat looking at the rings of smoke that wound up to the ceiling.

"Well, perhaps I've come at the right time, if that's so."

"You can help sit up."

"Have you had your supper, Warten?"

"Yes, Zalia, at the farm."

"And how's trade?" asked Stanse.

"Quietly, old girl."

They heard a moaning in the other room. Barbara lit the lantern and all went to look. Warten stayed behind, smoking.

Zeen lay there, on a poverty-stricken little bed, low down near the ground, behind the loom, huddled deep on his bolster under a dirty blanket: a thin little black chap, leaning against a pillow in the dancing twilight of the lantern. His eyes were closed and his bony face half-hidden in the blue night-cap. His breath rustled; and each puff from his hoarse throat, blowing out the thin flesh of his cheeks, escaped through a little opening on one side of his sunken lips, which each time opened and shut.

"Ooh! Ooh! Ooh!" cried Barbara.

"That's bad, that's bad," said Stanse and shook her head.

"His eyes are shut and yet he's not asleep!"

"Zeen! Zeen!" cried Mite and she pushed him back by his forehead to make him look up. "Zeen! Zeen! It's I: don't you know Mite?"

"Oof!" sighed Zeen; and his head dropped down again without his eyes opening.

"He's got the fever," said Barbara. "Just feel how his forehead's burning and he's as hot as fire."

"Haven't you poulticed him?" asked Stanse. "He wants poultices on his feet: mustard."

"We haven't any mustard and it's far to the village."

"Then he must have a bran bath, Zalia. Stanse, put on the kettle."

"Have you any bran, Zalia?"

"No, not ready; but there's maize."

"And a sieve?"

"Yes, there's a sieve."

"Hi, Warten, come and sift!"

Warten came in:

"Zeen, how are you, my boy? Oh, how thin he is! And his breath . . . it's spluttering, that's bad. He'll go off quickly, Barbara, it seems to me."

"Not tonight," said Treze.

"Warten, go to the loft, take the lamp and sift out a handful of maize; Zeen must have a bran bath at once."

Warten went up the stair. After a while, they heard above their heads the regular, jogging drag of the sieve over the boarded ceiling and the fine meal-dust snowed down through the cracks, whirling round the lamp, and fell on Zeen's bed and on the women standing round.

Zeen nodded his head. They held a bowl of milk to his mouth; two little white streaks ran down from the corners of his mouth into his shirt-collar.

The sieve went on dragging. The women looked at Zeen, then at one another and then at the lantern. In the kitchen, the kettle sang drearily. . . .

Warten came down from the loft with half a pailful of bran. Barbara poured the steaming water on it and flung in a handful of salt.

They took the clothes off the bed and pulled his feet into the bran-water. Zeen groaned; he opened his eyes wide and looked round wildly at all those people.

He hung there for a very long time, with his lean black legs out of the bed and the bony knees and shrunk thighs in the insipid, sickly-smelling steam of the bran-water. Then they lifted him out and stuck his wet feet under the bedclothes again. Zeen did not stir, but just lay with the rattle in his throat.

"What a sad sick man," said Stanse, softly.

Mite wanted to give him some food, eggs: it might be faintness.

Treze wanted to bring him round with gin: her husband had once . . .

"Is there any, for the night?. . ." asked Stanse.

"There's a whole bottle over there, in the cupboard."

Zeen opened his eyes—two green, glazed eyes, which no longer saw things—and wriggled his arms from under the clothes:

"Why don't you make the goat stop bleating?" he stammered.

They looked at one another.

"Zalia, why won't you speak to me? . . . And what are all these people doing here? . . . I don't want any one to help me die! . . . I and Zalia . . . I and Zalia . . . Look, how beautiful! Zalia, the procession's going up the wall there . . . Why don't you look? . . .

It's so beautiful! . . . And I, I'm the only ugly one in it. . . ."

"He's wandering," whispered Treze.

"And what's that chap doing here, Zalia?"

"It's I, Zeen, I: Warten the spectacle-man."

His eyes fell to again and his cheeks again blew the breath through the little slit of his mouth. It rattled; and the fever rose.

"It'll be tonight," said Treze.

"Where can Virginie be? She'll come too late."

"Virginie is better than three doctors or a priest either," thought Mite.

"Zalia, I think I'd better get out the candle."

Zalia went to the chest and got out the candle.

"Mother, I'm frightened," whined Fietje.

"You mustn't be frightened of dead people, child; you must get used to it."

"Have you any holy water, Zalia?"

"Oh, yes, Barbara: it's in the little pot over the bed!"

"And blessed palm?"

"Behind the crucifix."

There was a creaking in the kitchen and Virginie appeared past the loom: a little old woman huddled in her hooded cloak; in one hand she carried a little lantern and in the other a big prayer-book. She came quietly up to the bed, looked at Zeen for some time, felt his pulse and then, looking up, said, very quietly:

"Zeen's going. . . . Has the priest been?"

"The priest? . . . It's so far and so late and the poor soul's so old. . . ."

"What have you given him?"

"Haarlem oil, English salt . . ."

"And we put his feet in bran-water."

Virginie stood thinking.

"Have you any linseed-meal?" she asked.

"No."

"Then . . . but it's too late now, anyway. . . ."

And she looked into the sick man's eyes again.

"He's very far gone," thought Mite.

"Got worse quickly," said Barbara.

Zalia said nothing; she stood at the foot of the bed, looking at her husband and then at the women who were saying what they thought of him.

"Get the blessed candle; we must pray, good people," said Virginie; and she put on her spectacles and went and stood with her book under the light.

The women knelt on low chairs or on the floor. Warten stood with his elbows leaning on the rail of the bed, at Zeen's head. Treze took the blessed candle out of its paper covering and lit it at the lamp.

Zeen's chest rose and fell and his throat rattled painfully; his eyes stayed gazing dimly at the rafters of the ceiling; his thin lips were pale and his face turned blue with the pain; he no longer looked like a living thing.

Virginie read very slowly, with a dismal, drawling voice, through her nose, while Treze held Zeen's weak fingers closed round the candle. It was still as death.

"May the Light of the World, Christ Jesus, Who is symbolized by this candle, brightly light thy eyes that thou mayest not depart this life in death everlasting. Our Father . . ."

They softly muttered this Our Father and it remained solemnly still, with only Warten's rough grunting and Zeen's painful breathing and the goat which kept ramming its head against the wall. And then, slower by degrees:

"Depart, O Christian soul, from this sorrowful world; go to meet thy dear Bridegroom, Christ Jesus, and carry a lighted candle in thy hands: He Who . . ."

Then Barbara, interrupting her, whispered:

"Look, Virginie, he's getting worse; the rattle's getting fainter: turn over, you'll be too late."

Treze was tired of holding Zeen's hand round the candle: she spilt a few drops of wax on the rail of the bed and stuck the candle on it.

Zeen jerked himself up, put his hands under the clothes and fumbled with them; then he lay still.

"He's packing up," whispered Barbara.

"He's going," one of the others thought.

Virginie dipped the palm-branch into the holy water and sprinkled the bed and the bystanders; then she read on:

"Go forth, O Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, Who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, Who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified thee."

"Hurry, hurry, Virginie: he's almost stopped breathing!"

The cat jumped between Zalia and Treze on to the bed; it looked surprised at all those people and purred softly. Warten drove it away with his cap.

"Receive, O Lord, Thy servant Zeen into the place of salvation which he hopes to obtain through Thy mercy."

"Amen," they all answered.

"Deliver, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant from all danger of hell and from all pain and tribulation."

"Amen."

"Deliver, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant Zeen, as Thou deliveredest Enoch and Elias from the common death of the world."

"Amen."

"Deliver, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant Zeen, as Thou deliveredest . . ."

"I'm on fire! I'm on fire!" howled Warten. "My smock! My smock!"

And he jumped over all the chairs and rushed outside, with the others after him.

"Caught fire at the candle!" he cried, quite out of breath.

They put out the flames, pulled the smock over his head and poured water on his back, where his underclothes were smouldering.

"My smock, my smock!" he went on moaning. "Brand-new! Cost me forty-six stuivers!"

And he stood with his smock in his hands, looking at the huge holes and rents.

They made a great noise, all together, and their sharp voices rang far and wide into the still night.

Virginie alone had remained by the bedside. She picked up the candle, lit it again, put it back on the rail of the bed and then went on reading the prayers. When she saw that Zeen lay very calmly and no longer breathed, she sprinkled him with holy water for the last time and then went outside:

"People . . . he's with the Lord."

It was as if their fright had made them forget what was happening indoors: they rushed in, eager to know . . . and Zeen was dead.

"Stone-dead," said Barbara.

"Hopped the twig!" said Warten.

"Quick! Hurry! The tobacco-seed will be tainted!" screamed Mite; and she snatched down two or three linen bags which hung from the rafters and carried them outside.

First they moaned; then they tried to comfort one another, especially Zalia, who had dropped into a chair and turned very pale.

Then they set to work: Treze filled the little glasses; Barbara

hung the water over the fire; and Warten, in his shirt-sleeves, stropped his razor to shave Zeen's beard.

"And the children! The children who are not here!" moaned Zalia. "He ought to have seen the children!"

"First say the prayers," ordered Virginie.

All knelt down and, while Warten shaved the dead man, it went:

"Come to his assistance, all ye saints of God; meet him, all ye angels of God: receiving his soul, offering it in the sight of the Most High. . . .

"To Thee, O Lord, we commend the soul of Thy servant, that being dead to this world, he may live to Thee; and whatever sins he has committed in this life, through human frailty, do Thou, in Thy most merciful goodness, forgive. . . ."

"Amen," they answered.

Virginie shut her book, once more sprinkled holy water on the corpse and went home, praying as she went.

Zalia made the sign of the Cross and closed her husband's eyes; then she laid a white towel on a little table by the bed and put the candle on it and the crucifix and the holy water.

Warten and Barbara took Zeen out of the bed and put him on a chair, washed him all over with luke-warm water, put a clean shirt on him and his Sunday clothes over him; then they laid him on the bed again.

"He'll soon begin to must," said Barbara.

"The weather's warm."

"He's very bent: how'll they get him into the coffin?"

"Crack his back."

Treze looked round for a prayer-book to lay under Zeen's chin and a crucifix and rosary for his hands.

Mite took a red handkerchief and bound it round his head to keep his mouth closed. Fietje was still kneeling and saying Our Fathers.

"It's done now," said Barbara, with a deep sigh. "We'll have just one more glass and then go to bed."

"Oh, dear people, stay a little longer!" whined Zalia. "Don't leave me here alone."

"It's only," said Mite, "that it'll be light early tomorrow and we've had no sleep yet."

"Come, come," said Barbara, to comfort her, "you mustn't take on now. Zeen has lived his span and has died happily in his bed."

"Question is, shall we do as well?" said Mite.

"And Siska and Romenie and Kordula and the boys, who are

not here! They ought to have seen their father die! . . . The poor children, they'll cry so!"

"They'll know it in good time," said Warten.

"And where are they living now?" asked Mite.

"In France, the two oldest . . . and there's Miel, the soldier . . . it's in their letters, behind the glass."

"Give 'em to me," said Treze. "I'll make my boy write tomorrow, before he goes to school."

They were going off.

"And I, who, with this all, don't know where I'm to sleep," said Warten. "My old roost, over the goat-house: you'll be wanting that tonight, Zalia?"

Zalia wavered.

"Zalia could come with me," said Barbara.

"And leave the house alone? And who's to go to the priest tomorrow? And to the carpenter? And my harvest, my harvest! Yes, yes, Warten, do you get into the goat-house and help me a bit tomorrow. I shall sleep: why not?"

"*Alla,*[1] come, Fietje; mother's going home."

They went; and Zalia came a bit of the way with them. Their wooden shoes clattered softly in the powdery sand of the white road; when they had gone very far, their voices still rang loud and their figures looked like wandering pollards.

In the east, a thin golden-red streak hung between two dark clouds. It was very cool.

"Fine weather tomorrow," said Warten; and he trudged off to his goat-house. "Good-night, Zalia."

"Good-night, Warten."

"Sleep well."

"Sleep well too and say another Our Father for Zeen."

"Certainly."

She went in and bolted the door. Inside it all smelt of candle and the musty odor of the corpse. She put out the fire in the hearth, dipped her fingers once more in the holy water and made a cross over Zeen. While her lips muttered the evening prayers, she took off her kerchief, her jacket and her cap and let fall her skirt. Then she straddled across Zeen and lay right against the wall. She twisted her feet in her shift and crept carefully under the bed-clothes. She shuddered. Her thoughts turned like the wind: her daughters were in service in France and were now sleeping quietly and knew of nothing; her eldest, who was mar-

[1] A corruption of the French *allez!*

ried, and her husband and the children came only once a year to see their father; and even then . . . And now they would find him dead.

Her harvest . . . and she was alone now, to get it in. Warten would go to the priest early in the morning and to the carpenter: the priest ought to have been here, 'twas a comfort after all; but Zeen had always been good and . . . now to go dying all at once like this, without the sacraments. . . .

Why couldn't she sleep now? She was so tired, so worn out with that reaping; and it was so warm here, so stifling and it smelt queer: what a being could come to, when he was dead!

Had she slept at all? She had been lying there so long . . . and there was that smell! She wished she had sent Warten away and gone herself to lie in the goat-house; here, beside that corpse . . . but, after all, it was Zeen. . . .

The flame of the candle flickered and everything flickered with it—the loom, the black rafters and the crucifix—in dark shadow-stripes upon the wall. 'Twas that that kept her awake. She sat up and blew from where she was, but the flame danced more than ever and kept on burning. Then she carefully stepped across Zeen and nipped out the candle with her fingers. It was dark now. . . . She strode back into bed, stepping on Zeen's leg; and the corpse shook and the stomach rumbled. She held herself tucked against the wall, twisted and turned, pinched her eyes to, but did not sleep. The smell got into her nose and throat and it became very irksome, unbearable. And she got out of bed again, to open the window. A fresh breeze blew into the room; far away beyond, the sky began to brighten; and behind the cornfield she heard the singing beat of a sickle and the whistling of a sad, drawling street-ditty:

"They're at work already."

Now she lay listening to the whizzing beat and the rustle of the falling corn and that drawling, never-changing tune. . . .

The funeral would be the day after tomorrow: already she saw all the troop passing along the road and then in the church and then . . . all alone, home again. Zeen was dead now and she remained . . . and all those children, her children, who still had so long to live, would also grow old, in their turn, and die . . . ever on . . . and all that misery and slaving and then to go . . . and Zeen, her Zeen, the Zeen of yesterday, who was still alive then and not ill. Her Zeen; and she saw him as a young man over forty years ago: a handsome chap he was. She had lived so long with Zeen and had known him so well, better than her own self;

and that he should now be lying there beside her . . . cold . . . and never again . . . that he should now be dead.

Then she broke down and wept.

(From Stijn Streuvels, *Path of Life,* copyright 1915, Allen & Unwin, London)

F. V. Toussaint van Boelaere

LATE IDYLL

ON THE EASTERN SLOPE OF A HILL ROSE THE RENTED FARM OF FARmer Cies. On the opposite side, on the western slope of another hill was situated the homestead of Farmer Jan. From each of the two farms a winding path went down toward a lonely canal that flowed in the valley between the two hills. A small wooden bridge over the narrow waterway connected the two paths. Then from the small bridge a path that was wide enough for a fairly large wheelbarrow led along the water to the end of the valley and came out on the main road further on. That path was on the property of Farmer Cies. It had belonged to the estate for a long time.

Farmer Cies had a daughter by the name of Joanna, because Farmer Jan was her godfather. Farmer Jan had a son called Francies, because Farmer Cies had held him at the baptismal ceremonies. At the end of the baptismal celebration in honor of Joanna, Farmer Cies asked her godfather to contribute something toward the upkeep of the path they used in common, as well as toward that of the small bridge. Farmer Jan, satiated with heavy courses of good food, gladly consented. The next day however he regretted his promise.

When Francies also was baptized and every belly had been fully satisfied, Farmer Jan confidentially tapped Farmer Cies' shoulder and said:

"Friend, what do you think, shouldn't we widen the path as well as the small bridge?"

"I won't give no for an answer, godfather," replied Farmer Cies. "But I'll have to think it over." He was, however, laughing inwardly. And he never did give an answer. This increased Farmer Jan's resentment.

In the morning, as Joanna was going to school, she would wait

at the little bridge for Francies, who had a hard time getting up. She would sit down on the wooden boards, her books in her lap, and let her small legs dangle over the water. Her bright face looked rosy. Her blue eyes, beneath the gold of her sunlit hair, looked straight ahead.

When Francies went to school in the afternoon he tarried on the small bridge until Joanna, who was already helping with dishes, arrived. He rearranged the boards, improved the dyke, threw pebbles at a small fish he saw moving in the water and looked continuously with lifted head toward Farmer Cies' homestead, whence Joanna had as yet not appeared.

Together they would follow the same road. First they would walk silently side by side. Then, as they reached the mainroad, they would break into a run. They were in a hurry to join their companions. On the way back they would dawdle, however. They would look at the herbs, the shrubs and the trees. They followed with their two pairs of eyes the activities of an ant or a beetle in the dust of the little yellow path. They also knew where by the side of the ditch the sparrows or finches were nesting, how many eggs were in the nest of the blackbirds when the young would come out of their eggs. Together they pursued butterflies and would upset the wondrous molehills with their wooden shoes. And sometimes they sat on Thursday afternoons for hours on the small bridge, close together, fishing with rods made by Francies from a lath, a thread and a crooked pin. Often too, taking off their stockings and with pants or skirt rolled up, they would wade through the flowing water to catch fish with a thin box, or just for the fun of it. . . .

When Francies and Joanna were to partake of the Holy Sacrament for the first time, their mothers agreed that common festivities would crown their children's happiness.

Farmer Cies agreed and Farmer Jan did not say no: the feast was to be most elaborate.

Where both orchards reached the waterway, a large bridge was thrown over the ditch with boards and supports. From two young apple trees only the blossoming tops were visible; on either side of the tent there was one, and they looked like giant nosegays, which smelt sweeter than any bouquet ever has smelt. Farther on around the tent over the bridge stood the two orchards also in full bloom.

A mighty ox was slaughtered, three pigs and eleven piglets, forty-three rabbits, fifty-six roosters and one hundred and twelve

pigeons. One hundred and sixty-five large cakes and sweet custards were solemnly brought to the tables after forty bowls of rice pudding had been emptied. In front of every man stood five bottles of red wine and before every woman two bottles of white wine. And three boys continually walked back and forth from the large barrels of beer, which were monumentally piled up in a corner of the tent, to the table to fill the empty glasses.

In the place of honor sat Joanna and Francies, behind a beautifully mounted snow-white lamb with a large gilt wooden cross. Joanna was beautifully dressed in a pure white dress, which reached to the ground. She also wore white shoes and stockings, but hid them modestly beneath her dress. On her chest she wore a golden cross and on her fair golden hair was a virginal chaplet of flowers. Her cheeks glowed red, her eyes were a deep blue. She fixed her gaze steadily upon the snow-white lamb. Francies looked fine. He wore a brand new black lounge suit, black socks and black patent-leather shoes with buttons. Around his neck he wore a spotlessly white collar and white tie. And from his breast pocket peered a lace handkerchief. His hair had been curled down to his neck. He was beautiful. He would have liked to run to the small bridge to look at the free play of the little fish in the ditch. But he did not dare. He glanced steadily at the snow-white lamb; otherwise he would look at his plate.

The mothers were very much affected by the seriousness of the occasion and the particular beauty of their children. It was, moreover, a beautiful day: the sun glowed in the blue sky. The grass was green and fresh. All the trees around were covered with white and pink blossoms, and the smell of almonds was wafted by a gentle breeze through the air. Joanna and Francies, what an ideal couple they made!

The fathers were extremely pleased: their faces shone with satisfaction. If both their holdings were gathered into one, there would not be a richer homestead in the whole of Flanders. Then there would be prepared a meal compared to which that of today was but child's play! . . . With that Farmer Jan forgot his intention to obtain from Farmer Cies the understanding that he no longer would have to pay a cent toward the upkeep of the path. And Farmer Cies had forgotten that this time he had decided to force Farmer Jan to widen the common path and bridge. So the next day they felt even worse toward each other and they regretted their neglect.

When Farmer Cies noticed his neighbor first from across the waterway near his land, he would say: "Morning, Farmer Jan." If however Farmer Jan spied his neighbor first he would call out: "Morning, Farmer Cies." Politely each of them would then reply. But otherwise Farmer Cies went alone to High Mass and Farmer Jan did likewise. After church Farmer Jan would go to the "Merlo" and Farmer Cies would drink his schnaps at the "House of Trade." Both, as they had long been accustomed, would go homewards at exactly half-past eleven. But the "Merlo" was closer to the church than "House of Trade," so that all the way home Farmer Jan would see Farmer Cies walking ahead of him without recognizing him, and Farmer Cies would continuously hear the footsteps of Farmer Jan, while stubbornly refusing to see the person who was following him. In the evening Farmer Cies would play cards at the "Crown"; Farmer Jan frequented the "A Few Steps Up." And thus it was that they never met each other any more, neither in the village nor on the common path.

On Sundays, at twenty minutes of nine, Joanna and her mother stepped out of their house; at the same moment Francies and his mother would appear on the threshold of their home. They really met on the little bridge. And all four together, they would go to Mass. They also went in the afternoon together to the church services. And they again would go home together; on one side Joanna would walk next to her mother and on the other side Francies would flank his.

Now that Joanna and Francies had received Holy Communion for the first time and so had come to the age of reason, they began to help with the work. Francies turned the earth with his spade, and he preferred to do this at the border of the waterway, in the neighborhood of the small bridge. And Farmer Jan became proud of his son. Because he noticed very soon how Francies, as he was using the spade, turned over the soil up to the extreme limit of the stream and how every time a clod of loose soil slipped down from the bank into the water, he would drive the water further away: thus the property was gradually being enlarged. Farmer Cies also noticed this after a short while. He saw that this would cost him even more pains to keep the water in its course, so that he would incur no damage; and he became furious with that hypocritical rascal Francies.

Joanna now was allowed to take care of a cow. She preferred to herd it along the side of the water, in the neighborhood of the small bridge, to let it graze. She always went along the small

path. And Farmer Cies was very well pleased with it. Because he soon noticed that he would be able to feed another cow with the neglected grass along his path. He therefore let the herbs and the weeds grow and luxuriate: the cow would eventually become aware of it. Farmer Jan soon noticed that the path, toward the upkeep of which he did not contribute, was no longer taken care of, in order that Farmer Cies could feed another cow at his cost. He began to dislike horribly that sneaky Joanna. His hatred mounted. "I won't contribute even a button toward the upkeep any longer," he concluded angrily.

Cordule, the wife of Farmer Cies, died at midsummer. The solemn funeral took place at the eleven o'clock service. The church had been completely covered by black cloth on which glistened silver tears; fifty heavy candles burned on the high altar as well as on the side altars; seven priests in full robes celebrated the Mass. After the funeral, Farmer Cies invited people to his house. He had hired the best cook in the village. The meal was even more copious than at the time of the First Communion. Because Farmer Cies did not want anybody to think that he was a poor louse when Farmer Jan did not contribute. Carloads of fish and fowl, cooked and fried, twenty-seven bowls of rice pudding were scraped clean and ninety-one cakes and custards were enjoyed by the company. Five large barrels of beer were stacked up in the garden and four boys were incessantly walking hither and thither to fill the pots and the beakers. Far, far away on the main road, the poor of the village pursued their jollities.

Farmer Jan had not been invited. But during the whole course of the meal, he would come to stand in his shirtsleeves on the threshold of his house for a few seconds, with a brilliantly white napkin tied under his chin. His face was an uncompromising, shiny red. Every now and then he would noisily uncork a bottle of wine between his knees, sniff the cork and the neck of the bottle and make smacking noises, and would then lift it with the eye of a connoisseur and glare at it happily. At other times he wiped the abundant sweat from his face with the tip of the white, shining napkin, would laboriously loosen his trouser belt and, leaning heavily against the doorpost would gasp for breath: he no longer seemed to be able to talk coherently. But Francies was not to be seen all day.

Three months after Cordule's death, Apolline the wife of Farmer Jan, gave up the ghost. She had succumbed from a linger-

ing ailment that had been undermining her health for a long time. Her body was not yet cold when Farmer Jan ordered twenty laborers to build a wide path along his side of the stream. He had gravel and fine ashes brought from everywhere to cover the new dirt road like a coating of macadam. It looked like the driveway to an important castle. Farmer Jan did not want anybody to think that he cared about a day's spading of soil, in order to be independent of anybody.

The departure of Apolline took place in the morning at the eleven o'clock service. The parochial clergy came in full vestments to fetch the body from the house of death. Four men bore the casket. Just as the funeral procession left Farmer Jan's threshold and wound its way along the path toward the waterway, a cart loaded with manure appeared from Farmer Cies' courtyard. The wheels shrieked agonizingly because of dryness. The cart slowly descended the slope toward the small bridge and made for the old common dirt road. It kept even with the procession on the side—in step with Farmer Jan and Francies, behind the casket. Farmer Cies then appeared on the threshold of his dwelling. He had his working clothes on and his feet stuck into the heavy wooden shoes amply lined with straw. Over his jolly countenance was his grey cap, with the visor turned sideways. Thus he stood indifferently leaning against the doorjamb watching, a long, broad pipe alight in his mouth. But Joanna remained invisible all day.

Without a woman Farmer Jan could not get along on his farm. He hired a young thing, known throughout the neighborhood as a work horse, but rather limited in intelligence. She could not abide Francies. But Farmer Jan thought the most important thing was that everything ran smoothly, and this the new servant girl did superlatively.

Now that he had such a beautiful driveway, Farmer Jan bought a stable horse and a light coach. Thus he could save a lot of time. All day long he rode in and out. Every time he came or went he let his whip crack deafeningly; he sat straight as a pole in the carriage and held the reins like a baron. Farmer Cies might see him or spy upon him, but that was exactly what he wanted. However, not once when he drove out did he see hide nor hair of Farmer Cies, nor did he see that pest of a Joanna. Francies himself never used the coach. He just wandered around by himself. . . . The day Francies went to draw his number for conscription in the army, he came back home, very quietly and disheartened. Farmer Cies, as he saw Francies come by, slowly

approached the door of his homestead, smiling with pleasure. Hardly had Francies disappeared into the parental house or Farmer Jan ran shouting and jubilating down the hill, and behind him ran the new servant girl, swinging her skirts. Farmer Cies realized that he had been mistaken: Francies was out of it! It looked as if he had been born with a caul, that Francies. Enviously he thought of how he was the son of Farmer Jan. Otherwise both the homesteads' together would have celebrated.

For a moment he thought about a reconciliation. Then he suddenly saw the radiant expression on Joanna's face—how but a while ago she had been about to cry her eyes out. And then he heard how Farmer Jan and the new maid were bragging and crying at the small bridge, on the beautiful driveway. That female was waving a bit of paper. And Farmer Cies flew into passion.

In the course of a few years Farmer Jan died. He was buried solemnly, but without ostentation; there was no solemn funeral repast. The new maid left the farm the day after the inhumation. "I have been chased away," she cried everywhere; "I have spent my youth there and worked like a truck horse." Shortly thereafter an old woman moved into Francies' house, and life went on as formerly.

Three months precisely after Farmer Jan's demise, Farmer Cies also exchanged the temporal for the eternal. He was put to rest simply and quietly. Another farmer was found to run Joanna's homestead. And again the seasons followed one another with their different tasks and their same aim.

One Sunday Francies met Joanna at the little bridge. They were both going to Mass. Francies looked at Joanna, his eyes moist like those of a timid dog. But Joanna kept her glance turned earthward and continued on her way. As time passed, she dressed almost like a nun. Always clad in black, the golden fair hair flatly combed back and hidden under a black-brown cloth, as under an unchangeable smooth cap. But she went to church only on Sundays.

She worked as if she had to take care of a whole family. Her farm was getting ahead fine, though only the manservant stiff with years could do the masculine chores. But when sowing time came along, a tall figure would stride over the land to plow and sow. Then with the eternally revolving seasons, the harvest month would come again; and by the silver light from the moon

and the countless stars there rustled, with the gleaming of the scythe, the blessed song of the down-cut wheat; the wheelbarrow creaked under the load of golden blades, or there sounded the tireless beating of the flail upon the threshing-floor. Otherwise the whole homestead was plunged into dark quiet.

In the early morning Francies' homestead, which stretched out over the eastern slope of the one hill, rose first from the vanishing night darkness. The white walls shone shrilly; the roof gleamed red as if it had just been varnished. But the doors and the blinds remained closed as if the homestead had just gone to rest. Joanna looked at it every morning from the porch of her house shrouded in darkness. Lovingly, deeply stirred, she felt stirred like an innocent child. But every time she felt her heart throttled again; she knew how Farmer Cies had once appeared in the same spot, in his wide, straw-packed wooden shoes, his cap askew, the smoking, puffing pipe in his mouth in order to sneer at Farmer Jan in the presence of death. And in her own blood that turned cold in her veins she thought to understand that this was an evil deed, which sooner or later must be avenged.

Her dead father suppressed her will. . . .

Francies, however, was now farming behind the house. The beautiful driveway, which Farmer Jan had built and had always specially cared for, had disappeared under a carpet of hardy weeds. But the little bridge, nearby, still looked as before. Nothing seemed to have changed in it: no new beams, not a new nail. Even the mouldering board was there yet. The bridge could still be used at any time.

Daily, as soon as night fell, Francies appeared on the threshold of his already darkened home. Joanna's house would still radiate by itself in the glow of the setting sun. The white walls shone brilliantly, and the red tiled roof blossomed like a sweet-smelling exotic flower. Francies saw that the seasons passed regularly over Joanna's activities and that life was unavoidable and disappeared into the closed circle of the year. He knew his work, the work that came back daily: together with the old housekeeper, he accomplished it listlessly. He realized too what work needed to be done on Joanna's homestead. And only this work could give joy. Once he had wanted to talk to Joanna but she had gone on her way without lifting her eyes. And indeed it was on the same spot where Farmer Jan had behaved so cruelly and as if relishing it, sweating, drooling, puffing contentedly, in order to sneer at Farmer Cies. Past events have no turning.

Joanna died. She had left all her possessions, as a duty, to Francies. They talked about it in the village—thus the wish of Farmer Cies and Farmer Jan had been realized!—then all were silent again. Francies was indifferent to the legacy now that Joanna was no longer there. He labored on this land as well as on his own and took care of one as well as the other in so far as his strength allowed him. He lived by himself in the homestead. And as the years went by and as he became weaker and weaker, the round of his self-same labors encircled him. The weeds luxuriated everywhere, they grew over field and pasture and road. The unpruned trees of both the orchards grew wild, still producing healthy fruit, however, in turn ripening and then dropping one by one into the growing, sun-bleached hay. But Francies still stood every night on the threshold of his barren house. Resigned and happy, he breathed the well-known air of solitude spreading all around him. He looked over there at Joanna's empty homestead. He thought of how she had let herself grow old on the slope of the other hill, of Joanna in front of her house, of how she had greeted him and sometimes waved at him with her hand. But still he never felt the inclination to go there; the path that led to the little bridge had become invisible, overgrown with grass. And the little bridge itself, useless since Joanna was dead, had shrunk to a mouldering beam covered with green moss. Only the water of the brook still lapped happily and sang its eternal song.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

PART III

THE FULFILLMENT

Arthur van Schendel

ANGIOLINO AND SPRINGTIME

A SINFUL MAN IS NEVER WHOLLY SINFUL, JUST AS A POOR MAN, however poor he may be, is never wholly without some possession. How else could there be saints—for, when they were little they also screamed if they were hungry, played in the mud of the street and probably did things that only the angels know. But they had a little spot that was kept white, and when the golden rays fell upon it from day to day evil left them, passion, anger, the inclination to steal or to curse. And when they had become wholly white within they were able to do miraculous deeds so that the other saints saw them and spoke of it before the Throne of Bliss. Then He sent forth one with the loving message that another might enter blessedness. I do not say this because I imagine that I know better than the Fathers, but because I myself have seen how it happens with mankind. We are all born poor, but, as soon as one opens his eyes, he finds all that is necessary, yet for the other, the mother can find no decent cloth in which to wrap him. And then the vicissitudes that follow! Beppe can never waste so much that he does not always receive more; Felice is now rich, now poor; and let Buonaventura smile ever so amiably or complain ever so bitterly, it helps not at all, he cannot number the times that he has had to go without bread. And yet Beppe does not know what Buonaventura has more than he, nor does Felice know what is the best of what he does have. But Buonaventura certainly understands more because he is the poorest. That is the white spot in the poor man, he understands more than another. He knows that the lord who walks along and acts as if he did not see the outstretched hand is neither more nor less than himself. Most passers-by do not look at us, but have they the time, or have they learned to see others as we see them? And some are annoyed and consider it their right to pass unmolested, but have never understood anything that is outside their own profession. And others are annoyed because they think that we are lazy, but however much they may be

wearied by their own daily work, they do not know the weariness of waiting. And among them are some who are ashamed; they are poor even as we, though they wear silks and jewels. When they notice us they suddenly see an acquaintance on the opposite side, or they perceive something in the distance to look at, and the hand that they pass by remains empty. These are certainly neither more nor less than we, because they have, at least, shame, a good beginning for every man. Sinfulness is given us to understand the saints, and poverty, so that we may understand ourselves and each other.

How I ranted and cursed, when I was young, against the lot that withheld from me what others had in overabundance! I was prodigal and rich in desires, I believed with burning zeal that all the good things of the world were created for each and every one that was born and I raised my fists against the injustice that thrust me out of the existence of the rich, with their smiles and blushes, their broad chests and free eyes. Hundreds and hundreds of them I saw pass by, yet not so many but that the curses in my mouth were greater in number. And when the pain in my feet forced me to return to the darkness where my parents and the others spent the night, when I had suffered a beating and thrown myself on the ground, then the tears would fall because everything around me was so black with injustice. But thanks to God, I have always been really poor, the reality of it is the best thing that I have. I have never actually believed that in poverty there is injustice, neither of heaven nor of man. I have seen others who take up a weapon to revenge themselves or, by cunning, take what they desire, and of all those who did so when I was young I now see not one left, and the world has not changed for them nor for us. What they called unjust still exists, as it has always existed; can it then be unjust? But others who endured as we remained poor and learned. And there can be no better friendship, no more cordial wish than between us, Beppe, Felice and the others, when we see each other in the mornings or call a good night after a long day in the sun. Inherent in poverty is the beginning of wealth, just as in the blackest sinfulness there must be a beginning of holy life.

What harm does he do who begs? The worst accusation against him is that he lives a useless life. Who so accuses him has never begged, or seen as the beggar sees. Hundreds and hundreds pass us by before one at last stops, his hand trembles as he searches for the coin and as he hands it over there is a look in his eyes as of prayer. Who knows, then, what has stirred in his heart?

The Fathers speak of charity that is one of the virtues, but he who sees it daily can swear that it is more than a virtue that so moves men. It is a glance of more than pity, more than reverence, more than the best one might name. I have met that glance so frequently that I could say: I have seen it there, or there, and they would be holy places that I named, but it would not become me, and rather than that I will be silent and bear the reproach that a beggar is useless. Yes, and probably the reproach is just. A beggar is the least of all men, so there must be much of evil in him and he may be thankful if uselessness is his worst sin.

But the worst of the beggar is not his uselessness. He is a creature born little, always thrust into positions where he must forever remain little. But certainly there is truth in the accusation that I sometimes hear made by pious people, that he is immoral. Some of them, I know, steal easily, even though they have not the habit of theft. They carry off something if it lies handy and if they can make use of it. I even know some so unmoral that they will let a thing lie for no other reason than that they have no use for it. That is neither good nor bad, just unmoral. But for such as we it is often difficult to discern the line between good morals and bad. I have seldom stolen and often let a thing lie because I did not know why I should pick it up, but recently in the Corso I was ashamed of myself. I had earned little and given that out again for too little supper. Although it was already late I went home by a roundabout way because I enjoyed the first warm winds and there were many little stars. On the corner of the Corso, just under the lamp that was still burning, lay a strong rope, four or five yards long, I think. I stood and looked at that rope and did not know what to do. One may honestly keep what one finds if the loser does not return to ask for it. The saddler would give me five or six cents for it in the morning. But should I have any need of it in the morning? Then why should I not leave it there for another? Why should I always take what I find? And I thought further that a poor person has no right to pass by a good find, those five cents that I might get for the rope would be five cents that a wealthy man might keep for another tomorrow. But I turned away and, though I was so ashamed that I could feel the warmth in my cheeks, I let it lie. I am not sure, but I think that it was unmoral, San Giuseppe intercede for me; for how can a man know whether to listen to reason or to an inspiration. I walked on and quickly forgot the shame; there were many more stars now, and as I

crossed the bridge I smelt the fragrance of flowers in the night. It seemed as though I heard someone say: Angiolino, all things pass, rope, pennies, morals and everything, but if the shining of the stars and the fragrance of flowers delight you, say then an Ave Maria and you possess one thing that remains. And I bent before the blessed Virgin that stands on the other side and said three Aves.

On the following day I returned to the bridge. Buonaventura was already sitting there with a few others at the approach from the street. Now I had never taken my stand at the river, because I prefer to be in the crowd on the Piazza; you receive less there, for everyone is in a hurry, but the place swarms with so many, many people, and all those who came by regularly I knew well, was glad to see some of them although they never gave anything. Now I got the idea that it would be better on the bridge, I do not know why, perhaps because I had had a good inspiration there the evening before. It is not good to break from an old custom if one has profited by it, and here, moreover, there were already so many that the pennies must be scarce. They were all at the entrance to the bridge, near the crucifix on one side or near the niche opposite. And I had heard the voice on the middle of the bridge, there at the arch where you can see the water and the mountains in the distance. Now when I came and saw the sun on the river and heard the rushing of the water beneath, I did not hesitate, but thought: This is my place, heaven bless it. It was not long before Beppe came stumping along in amazement and he tried to convince me that if I was really not going to the Piazza it would be better to join the others because standing over the water never brings good fortune. A foolish superstition; there are some who believe that indeed it brings luck because there is a resemblance between fortune and water. I was of no mind to tell him that for me it was a question of sun and breeze, of the distant mountains and the fragrance, and not of gain. And when he saw that I wanted to stay he left me alone, but all that day I noticed their concern for me and their derision. Three pennies I got that day, one from a mendicant friar who looked poorer than any of us. But it must bore people, if they have already given at the entrance to the bridge, to see an outstretched hand again in the middle. That evening when I was reminded of my stomach and stood before an inn where roasting was going on, I thought of the rope that I had allowed to lie. But before I turned toward home I went back to the bridge and stood for a moment where I had been

standing all the day long. There were many, many stars and the moon was just coming up beyond San Frediano. I do not know what made me think of long ago, of my parents, of children with whom I played when I, myself, was a child, of a brother who always touched my cheek when he passed, of one whom I often saw when I was a boy but to whom I never spoke. I heard the plash of the water, I sought the mountains that were hidden in the night, and tears came to my eyes. Why? I do not know, but it was good, after a long day, to be in the darkness undisturbed and I let the tears fall without asking for the reason. On the opposite side someone began to play a guitar and to sing, judging by the voice it must be a boy. I sighed, but I would rather have sung. And all was quiet again, again I felt my empty stomach, and I must get home. And suddenly it seemed as if I heard a voice again, it said: Angiolino, hunger passes, but if tears fall for a time that has passed, if you think of people that you would wish to see again, if you would rather sing than sigh, then say an Ave Maria and you shall sing and hear the people of earlier days. So I went on; I knew that it was good on the middle of the bridge, and on the other side I said three Ave Marias.

On the following day also I received but little, something more, I think, but not enough. It seemed as though fortune had entirely forgotten me, for me there were no more of those many windfalls that we find through our habit of looking at the ground and examining the value of what others throw away. Beppe paid for my bread that evening. But before I went home, when it was quiet and the moon, somewhat larger, shone more clearly on the water, I stood on the bridge again at the midmost arch that looks toward the mountains. The wind was warmer and I heard more sounds. I waited, for the voice might speak again. While waiting I began to think of the boy that I had been, of the years when I laughed at nothing at all and my heart throbbed at nothing at all. Ah, that I have no better word than this "nothing"! For it is still so, at that very moment I could have laughed again, and my heart throbbed as it used to, just let me say at nothing, the same nothing for which, among the many evil things, we sometimes do a thing that we know certainly to be good though we do not understand it. I stood there for a long time, waiting and thinking of those days when so much might have happened that never did happen, until the first bell of morning sounded from San Iacopo. I was not hungry and not sleepy and would rather have stayed longer, but one learns with the years that it is not wise to forget everything, and what age

learns is surely no less good than what youth discovers. I should be too tired for the task tomorrow if I did not rest. So I left and naturally said an Ave before the blessed Virgin on the corner, even without being told to do so.

And so the days passed. Ponte Vecchio brought me no prosperity. Friends tried to persuade me to return to the Piazza again or else to come near them, therefore I told Buonaventura that I had had an inspiration which told me that good fortune would come to me in the middle of the river. After that he came each day to ask, although he walks with difficulty. The saints have never been indifferent to me, though I seldom enter a church and pray only when it is necessary, but now it was as if the saints were looking down on me and a prayer often came to me of itself. And I noticed that many a time I forgot to lift my hat when someone approached because I was thinking of other things, and I was not surprised that I received so little, nor did it grieve me, for I was not much tormented by hunger, even though I had less food. In those days a sparkle on the water or a thought of Saint Joseph was more to me than bread.

And one day in the past week, a wonderful day, fortune came, and the way of her coming was strange and amazing. I sat with my back turned to the passers-by, for I was looking at the mountains, when I was called and saw behind me a nobleman on horseback, a count or an ambassador; he had such bright eyes that my heart began to throb, there was something about him that reminded me of long ago. He asked at what I was staring and when I answered: "At the mountains, noble sir," he laughed aloud so that the air resounded with it. The voice, that laugh was more than fortune ever could be, it was a sound of true happiness as if the sun or the wind were to laugh. Then he called out: "Look well, spring comes from the mountains!" I was so amazed that my ears rang, now I knew that his voice resembled one that was dear to me, that this was the sound for which I had waited all those long days. But it was strange and sad, too, however silly it may sound, that he then took a purse from his belt and tossed it to me, as if after the gift he would pass on like any other and never return again. And he did leave, too, before I could say anything. When he had disappeared from the bridge I took up the purse and looked at the mountains yonder in the sun. What had I to do with gold now that the voice and that laugh, which promised everything, had vanished again? And as I stood dully staring with my heart full of grief and my body

all weariness and fatigue, without a thought, I heard those words again: Spring comes from the mountains.

Was it spring that I saw coming there? It had been bright and now, suddenly, a mist hung in the distance, the sun over San Miniato became pale. I saw a cloud of dust swirl up from San Niccolo, high above the trees, the river below began to foam from the strong, hot wind. It lasted but a moment and everyone who passed looked at the next man with gleaming eyes and red face, and the cries that were called out had a foolish sound. The water flowed, shimmering, and even the light shimmered. I made the sign of the cross while thinking of the blessed Maria, but I thought also of that nobleman who had gazed on me with eyes like the archangels in the church. I felt that I could stand here no longer this day, that I must walk, walk a great deal, hear and see a great deal.

But first I wanted to give thanks, and the nearest church was San Stefano. Not more than three candles were burning before saints that I did not know, before San Giuseppe there were none. People always give more to the others and forget him, probably because they think that he cannot help as much as the others. But it is all one to me, I know that in heaven he is second to none. So I thanked him for what had happened to me and when I had looked at the money in the purse I asked a brother who was busy there to give me a four-pound candle. He seemed to have left the world not long ago, for he looked from me to the purse in astonishment. But he brought the candle and I lit it myself. This was the second time in my life that I could afford to light a candle; the flame was so pure, so still, that I had to pray: San Giuseppe, pray for us that every heart may go, as quiet and as pure, toward holiness. The crowds and merriment of the street are good to look upon, for the improvidence of man is a lovely gift, but what every one of us most desires is really the stillness and the purity of the most Blessed. In stillness we can hear Him, in purity we begin to comprehend. San Giuseppe, who was a father to the Child, knows well what I mean.

Then I went to walk among men. It was a pleasure to see how they no longer hurried now that they had forgotten their business in the spring, all with flushed faces, or with loose or open clothing; on the corners of the streets the wind fluttered their hair. If you watch them when they are engaged in business there is always a hubbub of vehemence or contention, or you notice

that a grudge is kept hidden, and I even have friends who say that there is more evil than we can imagine. But it is certain, as I plainly saw that morning, that there is also more kindliness among men than we can imagine. The greetings of two friends who embraced each other were good to hear: the nonsense, if they were youngsters; old people who nodded with half-shut eyes and now and then clapped someone on the shoulder; the laughter of young women; the quiet words of mothers. Do the doves of Santa Maria make sweeter sounds in the early morning or before they go to sleep? A man cannot be so sinful but that he possesses something from the time before he was created, you can see it and hear it whenever you will.

Two women were standing there with flowers, and again and again I saw someone come up to buy. Why were those flowers plucked and sold? It could not be just a few lovers or the carefree who carried them away for I saw old women, too, trudging along step by step with their flowers firmly clutched to their breasts. And I bought a bunch, too, because spring had come and I too sniffed their fragrance and felt a smile. I thought: I wish that I could take them to my mother's grave, she must have had so much anxiety about me of which I never heard and much sweetness, too, when I was still little and lay in her arms. But I could not do it, because I was in the hospital when she was buried and by the time I was able to leave no one knew any more where she had been laid. I was standing in front of the Santa Maria cloister and I went into the yard and laid a flower here and there on the graves, they who lay beneath understood well that it was for my mother and for them, too, for beyond they do not make the distinctions that we do here. They know that no flower is necessary, nor even a thought, if we but step softly over the ground where their dust lies, as a dove alights. If you stay there long it is as if you heard them: not even your prayer is necessary; but they are no longer in want as we are, that makes it for us a necessity.

I could not stay long in Santa Maria; from outside a song floated over the wall and I wanted to see more of the clear sky. A barber lives there near the market, who sometimes helped me and as I seldom come into this neighborhood I went there now to visit him. I would gladly have given him something or brought sweets to his children, but I remembered that he was certainly one of those who gives rather than receives, he would rather have a word of greeting and my thanks than a gift. He was standing at his door and welcomed me with friendliness. I could hear in

his hearty laugh how well pleased he was that I remembered him. He said that I ought to look more tidy, sat me on his stool, clipped my hair and shaved the bristly growth from my cheeks, and, when he had finished, gave me two pennies. I needed neither the clipping nor the shave, the pennies even less, but could I have refused? One must accept even when one thinks one does not need it, for it may be a necessity to the giver to give. And even a beggar may not refuse what is offered to him.

It was approaching midday; I realized that I was getting hungry. It was a long walk to San Frediano, and I knew an eating-house nearby, but on the day of my good fortune I did not want to desert my friends and Gino who sometimes gave more than I paid for. So I walked back and I did not regret it. They received me boisterously. They had already heard of my fortune, how I do not know. The rumor of misfortune spreads quickly, yes, but among us good fortune is so coveted that we feel when it is near, even if it is in another street, and we are glad of it. Whether that is a virtue or just something natural I should not be able to say, but I know very well that it is not only the poor who can rejoice over another's good luck, a child sometimes looks with a lovely blush at a doll that another child is holding, and I have often seen wealthy people stop in admiration of another's furs or jewels. It is because there is joy in every heart over the good gifts of the world.

There were ten of them sitting there, some who never come here otherwise but were called now by the rumor of my good luck, and Buonaventura, who is not miserly but never parts with his wine, let me drink from his cup. I called to Gino that I was giving a feast and that all were invited. Then they began to shout so that I could not say a word, they would not have it, they claimed that I must be their guest in celebration of my fine day. At first it seemed foolish that I, who had more than all of them together, should be their guest instead of their being mine, but they were right, it was their right to celebrate the good fortune of a friend. And Gino did his best, that is certain. After we had examined the purse full of golden ducats and florins, enough to live like a lord, we ate and drank and laughed and sang songs until vespers. Then they all got up, for they had to think of the morrow. And I left, too.

On the river it seemed that sadness took possession of me, a need to be alone or to seek for something tender. I left my friends and went close to the bank. There was a strange fragrance in the air, of flowers, of a church, of a burial. I have thought more than

once that there must be a connection between these three. Flowers always bloom at the time when the world is full of joy and love and devotion, and there must surely be a connection between these things and the church and the time after life. I enjoyed the fragrance as much as I could. Where the water falls and flows faster, passing San Niccolo, I stood still to listen to the hissing. It flowed with a great splashing of foam, and then flowed onward faster. Water is indeed the purest substance, it has no form of its own and can have all forms. What is now a drop or a spray is not to be found again the next instant in the stream. But is not the heart that I call my own just like that? Now it is here, the heart of Angiolina standing here, and happy, and where will it be tomorrow and how, and will it truly be a heart? And may I truly pray that heaven which made it will never let it perish? It is better, I thought, to be grateful that this heart can rejoice here in itself that would like to be all things and is nothing.

Behind me stood the heights of San Miniato, there whence the spring had come. I climbed up and, as I felt a heaviness in my legs, sat down upon the grass. Then suddenly I saw the glory of the sky and the splendor of the city. The sun was setting and painted the sky on the other side, a glistening mist hung over the roofs. As the sun set now I had seen it many times, every spring and every summer, year after year, and yet there came from the glow a beatitude I did not know. And it was even so with the city; the haze and glisten were, of course, well known to me, but in them gleamed another light. It seemed as if a warm breath rose from below, from the hundreds of houses and churches, and as if from above a refreshing fragrance fell. And it was true, also, only I had never seen it and therefore it seemed new to me. Am I not one of the many people and am I not a part of the earth? And does not a warm breath rise from me even though I do not speak? The golden haze yonder held the sigh of the smallest child and mine as well. And where there are sighs and longings, comfort certainly falls too. While I stared out where the light was already becoming redder and a star began to sparkle clearly, thoughts of the long ago awakened in me with sometimes a question of the future. I had never loved anyone very dearly, not even myself. But there was one for whom I would willingly have burnt the little that I had and that I was, so that on the last day I should not have had any soul left. And that one never knew me, never even saw me. When I think of it I must

fold my hands and pray: Blessed Maria, blessed San Giuseppe, I am poor and weak, I have received little in my heart to cherish the love of others, forgive me. All my life I have been able to do nothing but wait on the street, in truth, not just for pennies, I was too weak to do what I ought to have done. And now that I pray I dare not promise that I shall ever do what I ought, for I know that I am too weak for anything else than waiting. I have not been able to love the many who were my friends because I always looked forward and to you, blessed Maria, to you, San Giuseppe, I dare admit that the hope that it may happen is ever in my heart. For some who in this world have not the happiness of a wife, a child, a home, ah, of all that is best in the world, it is kept for the future, for heaven has placed that happiness in their hearts and what heaven does is truth. All that happiness in their hearts and all the loving-kindness that shall one day come to them is one and the same. The house exists although it has not been built, the child exists though it has not yet been born. I pray thee, protect the wife whose hand I have never touched, the house that is to be built, the child to be born; I pray thee, protect them.

I sat there for a long time, until all the stars sparkled in the night. Possibly I slept or dozed, possibly my soul had even wandered from me. Then I felt a breath over me and I heard words, quite clearly; I dare not think that it was Maria or San Giuseppe, I thought it must be the spring, in passing: Angiolino, every prayer is heard even though it is not spoken. And then again, still more softly, more kindly: Wait, and all your desires shall be given you. My heart was full, I could no longer hold the fragrance of the night.

I stood up and went into the city. It was lonely and quiet, almost all the lamps were out. Below the wall of the prison a woman spoke to me, lamenting and begging. In the darkness she could not see my clothes. Her husband was in there, she said, and could not go free until the fine was paid, she and her children would have to beg. "Oh, noble sir," she wailed, "preserve us from the very worst." I had the purse in my pocket and gave it to her.

It was glorious walking all that night, under the stars, with a song on my lips. A sinful man is never wholly sinful and a poor man sometimes possesses more than he needs, then let him thank the saints and laugh as the wind of spring blows over him.

Translated by WILHELMINA C. NIEWENHOUS

R. N. Roland Holst

DOG AND MAN

WHEN, ADVANCING IN YEARS, YOU ARE GETTING MORE SELF-CONTAINED and apt to turn away from the world; when the autumnal silence within you, though by no means wintry decay, makes you incline to a peace too easily gained; then the moment has come for you to have a dog. I wish you to have one as a companion, partly because you probably need comfort, but more still, because it is good to have a warm-hearted being beside you, who knows nothing of what you have achieved, nor cares what you are trying to achieve, who thinks nothing of what you consider important and, so exacting is he, never spares you, but is victorious on every occasion.

Ever since the dog attached himself to man, he has shared the human lot and has been subject to the same humiliation which threatens man. Estranged from savage nature and freedom of chase, he has, through the centuries, grown more and more dependent. If you are shortsighted, you can easily make him a slave of the bread-basket or force him to a submissiveness which scarcely astonishes us in our fellow-men. You can teach him to cringe or, misusing him, turn him into a policeman, a buffoon or a miserable clown. You can make him vain, lazy, fond of dainties, or change him into a servile fawner. It may be owing to man that dogs become vicious and sullen or deteriorate into bold vagabonds when they find no outlet for their faithfulness. Man may also turn into a calculating, petty-minded creature, and that quite easily, for are there not thousands of such people?

All this you can do by hunger, pain and cunning, not because you are their superior, but because you have the power to humble them and render them contemptible, exactly in the same way that you can humble and render your fellow-men contemptible.

All this you can do.

But you can also, thanks to the dog, become more human, and wiser too, by recognizing nature. You will also be comforted by him, innumerable times, and be enabled, better than by listening to the confusing talk of insistent men, to fortify your faith in mankind, reflecting that men, those other poor dogs, may eventu-

ally regain their pride and self-reliance by being nobler and wiser masters to themselves.

But remember that every dog is a character, however pliable his nature may be, and that if, instead of choosing your companion, you buy him haphazardly, you may find yourself deceived. Indeed, it is needless to increase your difficulties by living with and beside a dog who does not fit in with you, who understands you as little as you do him. Believe me, nothing but annoyance and humiliation on both sides will be the result.

You think this exaggeration?

Very well, then buy your dog at random and you will find what it means to be neither loved nor trusted, but constantly jeered at by an animal. Do not take a dog out of pity, either, for really we are sufficiently pleased with ourselves already and quite sentimental enough.

But if you are lucky enough to possess a dog who strengthens the feeling of responsibility in you, you are privileged, for inasmuch as you love you will be changed.

Two primitive instincts appear strongly and distinctly in every dog. Through hundreds of centuries those two instincts have been preserved and they lie intact in every young, unsteady, puling little dog, like two poles between which its consciousness grows—the emotional instinct which urges him to seek man, and the physical instinct which urges him to go roaming and hunting. This is what gives the dog his great charm: his touching need of love and, side by side with it, his obedience to the strong call of nature, luring him to go where he entirely belongs to himself and lives at his own sweet will. But most touching is it to us, divided in nature as we are, to see how those two primitive instincts are at war in him, each fighting for its own rights so that the dog himself has great difficulty in finding the balance between those two compelling, yet clashing desires on which his happiness depends to such a degree. Who does not discern this struggle in the dog has never understood the torturing nostalgia expressing itself in the deep sigh with which he curls himself up in the corner of the room, when he knows that all the doors are shut. Neither can he understand the exuberant joy which the dog shows when he comes home, after a long ramble, to his master, in whom, between ourselves, he has an exaggerated faith. As this exaggeration remains silent, it never becomes, as among men, a public lie.

We are walking to my studio together; the sky is clear, the day

fine. He goes along with me or runs on in front carelessly, but at one particular spot there comes a moment when, every day over again, the struggle between his two desires has to be fought. To the right are the woods and rambling and hunting, to the left the studio with snugness and the master. He hesitates, he lingers, he stops—the same struggle recurs every day . . . except when it rains.

"All right, go then, go then," and I close the door of my workshop. After a while he comes back and asks for admittance. He is wet with dew and out of breath, his panting satisfaction reminds one of the exhilaration with which a skater, after a long run, enters the warm inn, so that no one can doubt of the tingling joy outside. He is happy, but now his other urge must quickly be satisfied. It does not matter if he is dripping wet, he leaps to his master and presses close against him. Not till now does he feel completely and entirely satisfied.

What has the master done all this time? Often not yet ploughed a single furrow of his day's work. Might not he too have found happiness in the clear morning outside? We are often uncertain in our desires and but rarely steer our barque in a definite direction.

Certainly dogs are sometimes inconstant in their love, but are not we the same? Sudden moods come upon them as well as upon us. But how soon they turn back to the safe harbor! It seems that the slight menace renders the gained certainty deeper and happier. Whoever raises a wall round his own personality, and keeps his friend a prisoner without, robs himself of the satisfaction of being preferred to every one else and of being, after all, the chosen one.

Coming home, back from the world of men, full of bitterness at the never ending waste of words, your self-confidence maimed and riddled, feeling weary and dull, you are hailed by your silent friend. Touching your heart at once by his gladness, he settles down quietly, leaning heavily against your leg. The animal warmth rises higher and higher, the nothing-demanding, calmly waiting source of love at last softens and thaws the heart.

If, by and by, the master, delivered from pride and irritation, thinks more kindly of men, not after all so very different from himself, it is really not because his bitterness was without cause, not because he has become wiser in such a short time, but because the silent animal has nourished him imperceptibly from the only source which can give relief from all the bitterness of life.

Now and then he slips down and falls asleep across his master's feet. Is he really asleep? Who shall say? You accommodate yourself to him and sit still, waiting till your friend awakes or wants to do something else. Who has not, keeping vigil by a bedside, unexpectedly received illumination? Who has not, when ill, although lying with shut eyes, recognized in the unseen presence of watchful love, a source of safe and blissful calm? Watcher and watched simultaneously, the dog is a weaver of repose, and, while you imagine that you are allowing him to rest, it is really he who forces you to that quiet which brings healing to the tired heart.

Hours have passed. You have sat bent over your work. Following your searching, winging thoughts your glance turns up and aside. There your eyes meet two other eyes which, who shall say how long already or why, have been watching you from the depth of the chair in which your friend lies curled up. No sound, no movement, nothing but two pairs of eyes which in the buzzing silence of the room meet, and in that meeting become aware of unexpected happiness. He wags his tail, scarcely perceptibly, but immovably he keeps looking at you, with persistent gentleness, as if he feared that by and by immeasurable seas will separate him from you again.

But these wide seas! They separate you even now, gulfs of spiritual and bodily differences not to be bridged. You are indeed out of each other's reach and yet, at the same time, touchingly near. You ask for miracles; here is one of the miracles surrounding you which you so carelessly pass by. For is not this a wonder greater than the meeting of two souls who can measure each other's virtues and needs in the depth of their own hearts?

This is the meeting of two souls flying to each other from two worlds which are irrevocably separated, different in kind, in aim and destination. And yet, just as a power that moves the universe rushes through the infinite, incalculable distances, so a small spark of that same power can do away with all distances and separations between two beings and kindle the desire for warmth in their hearts.

I have not tried to draw the picture of a special dog for you, for this would be doing injustice to the kind. To be honest, I must acknowledge that my thoughts have been stimulated by the remembrance of a small, black friend who accompanied me on the road of life for a while. The time was too short certainly, for I assure you that we had not nearly reached the end of our grateful astonishment at each other.

I am now thinking of his coming and departing. I saw him for

the first time at my back-door, bright, strong, very young still, out of breath from running behind the bicycle of a grocer's boy. We caressed each other, and a mutual liking at once sprang up. So he stayed with me. Indeed, this was a happy day in our lives. I remember the warm love he gave me, the many-colored joy he brought me, the rest with all its beautiful revelations from which his presence dispelled the too great loneliness. When I saw him as he lay stretched out, the warmth of life ebbing from him, I fully realized that he had been my superior, at least in never-failing honesty. He was my superior also in strong self-completeness.

At last, he pathetically inclined his soft head to the great rest, and I realized that he who had so often overtaken me with wild joy was now irrevocably in front of me on that long, uninterrupted course which we all make through the secrets of inscrutable nature.

Translated by J. F. De Wilde

(From *The World's Best Essays,* copyright 1929, Harper & Brothers, New York)

Aart van der Leeuw

MINIATURES

FREDERICK THE WHISTLER.

During my youth, whistling was considered the exclusive privilege of schoolboys.

What fun it was to wander around with hands in one's pockets, head tilted backwards and lips pursed, to sling one's fanfares into the air! Those who attended the *gymnasium* only seldom indulged in this pastime, and then only by mistake, when they had for instance had an unexpected holiday given them or had been to a party the night before. Students were in no case allowed to do so, and once your clothes were cut to the pattern of a doctor's, a clergyman's, or a captain's, as you promenaded through town, it was equal to having yourself torn to shreds and thrown to the dogs still to indulge in whistling. Yet there was F. N., professor, mind you, at the Polytechnic School within our walls, who daily committed the sin of whistling a given solo on the public thoroughfare.

The result of that was that he received the nickname "Frederick the Whistler."

The story goes that one day he was rebuked for such bad manners by a friend. He looked up surprised, reflected and then said: "I believe that I do it when I see something in the street."

Of course the friend had not been able to keep quiet, and so this extraordinary explanation had been spread abroad, even reaching the school benches. With the result, that we nosy people had to find out what was at the bottom of it all. On the street? Something pleasant?

That was something to be thoroughly investigated.

"Here he comes," we whispered to each other one beautiful spring morning. Right in front of us, F. N. was navigating past the houses next to the canal. Solitary and in deep silence; only a silly little girl tripped close by, a skinny thing on long, skinny spindle-legs, with a ridiculous braid over her shoulder. Nowhere else was there anything in sight, and yet we suddenly had to listen breathlessly; we held a finger into the air. There it was, and not another mortal was in sight but that chit with her music briefcase. On the street? And what was pleasant about it? The spirited whistling lost itself in the distance, because we had stopped in order to submit the housefronts, the windows and the basements to a closer scrutiny. All in vain.

The second time we came upon his track, it was again on the street along the canal, again in the morning; it was a market day, but too early for much traffic. Only a flower boat was sailing through the water, a fat skipper at the rudder. We could hardly withstand the temptation to bombard him with horse apples. And we were sorry that at that moment we couldn't find anything to throw. . . . Moreover, we didn't have the time. . . . We were dogging Frederick's steps. He was walking slowly along, sunk in thought. Suddenly we saw him looking around, as if somebody had called him, to his right at the house, above there he started whistling, as if the world should be witness to it.

"But why?" we asked ourselves, completely at a loss.

And then there was that hot day in August, when I and a little friend were playing marbles. I had scooped out a hole with my five fingers, only there was such a vibrating heat rising from the ground that sweat rolled into our eyes, and all our aims failed to find the mark. Mad, hot and carelessly holding our caps in our fists, we marched homeward, and who should meet us in the middle of the sunniest street of the city but Frederick the Whistler. As usual, he walked sunk in a problem, somewhat bent, frowning

with his mouth tightly shut. When he was only a step away from us, he lifted his head, glared at me and, at the same time, like powder that has been touched off by a spark, a triumphant march burst forth from his lips.

"Nonsense!" we mumbled.

Still I could not refrain, as soon as I was at home, from posturing curiously before the mirror. I felt deeply ashamed. I was scarlet, my hair was tousled and apparently I had rubbed the result of my gravedigger's labor over my face, because there was a broad black smudge running from my nose over my chin.

"Is Frederick the Whistler crazy?" I asked that afternoon at the table.

"Quite the contrary," my father said as he laughed.

He remained a riddle to us.

THE MERCHANT WITH THE BLUE FEZ.

I want to warn you against the Oriental merchants, the Persians, who come to your door luring you with their rugs. Mostly they wear a red fez, but the one I will tell you about had a blue one.

I have a friend living here with his wife. Highly respectable, solid and level-headed people; very rich and without children; not old at all, but still, past their youth.

One morning they find this Persian standing in their hallway. After a few dignified salaams he spreads his rug over the floor. A beauty; smouldering in its subdued tints; bronzy green, wine-red, and in between garlands of branches and flowers, motifs of animals. He asks a fabulous price for it.

"Are you crazy, fellow!"

"A prayer rug, two thousand years old."

Solemnly, slowly, he lets himself down onto it, crossing his legs, and then he invites the lady to sit next to him. Heaven knows why, but she does it; she is sitting, however, not on the floor, but on the saddle of a snow-white ambling horse. Separated from the hunting procession, she has lost her way between the bronzy green and the wine red. She sees a horseman approaching, a prince apparently, bejeweled and with a turban, his right hand on the gold leather rein, and in the left hand a hooded falcon. He greets her.

"Will you do me the honor of being my guest? Close by, my palace is awaiting you."

A reception like a fairy tale. Music in the evening.

"Yes, but my husband at home. . . ."

Which does not alter the fact that before a year is gone by she gives birth to a daughter, and after an equal amount of time, to a son. Twelve children one after another. So she lives prosperously and happily. And finally she dies from nostalgia and worry, because the council of the viziers, in which her lover had to participate, lasted an hour longer than had been arranged. With all the twelve children following her bier she is buried.

"Well," says the Persian, as he helps her to her feet. She can't utter a word.

It is my friend's turn now. He obeys also, lets himself sink down with a sigh, has some difficulty in folding his short legs and tries to maintain his balance no, not on the rug, but on the hump of a camel's back. Following him is an endless caravan, bales and boxes piled in between hairy humps. Through luxurious country. . . . For his merchandise he will get tenfold the amount it cost him two weeks ago. New provisions are bought for the money obtained, which he hopes to get rid of at twenty times the purchase price in Bagdad. He is figuring. The ships of the desert swing along lazily and undisturbed, until suddenly, from the side of the bushes a shrill whistling sound pierces the air. Robbers. Clash of arms—the attack—the retinue is hacked to pieces. They spare his life. They chain him in order to sell him in the first village as a slave. He is sold to a miserably poor baker who cannot even afford a horse. He will now have to tread in the mill; and if there is the slightest bit of dirt in the flour or a kernel that has not been completely ground, he receives the only too well-known number of blows with a stick from the Thousand and One Nights. Thus he lives until his beard has become white. And he dies, because the giver of the blows with the stick has lost count and given him one more than the original order entitled him to. He is buried.

"Well?" asks the Persian, as he helps him up.

He, too, is unable to utter a syllable.

And the merchant asks for double the amount he first mentioned.

"Come on, don't you want to, husband?" his wife whispers hastily.

"Get out!" my friend shouts, scarlet of face. And if the rug merchant had not disappeared instantly, as if he had sunk through the floor, he would have left the house in a very untender fashion.

They both told me their adventures, but they did not tell each

other. She has become restless: since then she must go to all kinds of places at night to find amusement, and she asks everybody for news about the Persian with the blue fez. My friend has, however, subscribed to still more newspapers and from early morn to late at night he sits there with a dark and worried face and tries to decipher the news about the crisis.

So when a merchant with a carpet under his arm comes ringing your doorbell. . . .

THE STOVE.

Autumn winds, the dance of withered leaves, and the rain pinpointing your window. . . . It is getting cold, and you forgive yourself for having sent somebody out to get it.

"Come in!"

Two pitchblack smith's helpers bring it in and set it down on some part of your carpet, "Je brule tout l'hiver sans m'éteindre" —a Goddess-salamander stove, unwieldy, as tall as a man.

"All right, thank you."

It is impossible to live without some kind of rhythm to give some measure to your getting up, your meals and your going to bed; your thoughts stumble, when they don't run in some kind of verse form, and especially in your surroundings you need some kind of melody. The table. No, it cannot be moved, the closet occupies a definite place, and may the hand wither that takes the picture from its spot; your fireplace—the mantel, mirror and vases—impossible to move. And into the midst of all this comes this cast-iron monster like an animal on four legs, and it opens a maw like a monster in tales for children.

"Ought to make a fire right away," you mumble thoughtfully and you stare anxiously at the shiny black lead. And of course the stink lasts for two days. You retire into a corner of the room, cough, sniff and make a lot of erasures in your writing, and in the meantime your torturer grunts, snores and rattles, sends forth smoke and greets you as you pass with the mocking smile of a falling spark behind the mica. That is the way it starts, and there follows immediately the betrayal of the cat, Theodorus. Day in day out he has lain cozily on the chair next to your desk, rolled into a ball, or awake, straight up, proudly sticking out the white shield of his breast, taking you in with the sphinxlike glare of his yellow green eyes. His calmness made your work restful, and his dignity helped mold your sentences. But now he noiselessly glides from his cushion, slinks in the direction of the Goddess, sniffs the

plate, poker and coal-scuttle, and chooses a place right in front of the metal feet of the new master.

"Dorus!" you call severely, but he turns the side of his tail toward you. Disowning you, turning against you. "Desertion," you mumble; in reality he seems more of a mediator between yourself and your enemy.

The wind has changed, and you are prevented from looking through the window at the garden by the flora of frost-flowers. You shove somewhat nearer to where it is warm; first you let a shovelful of anthracite and coke thunder down the dragon's maw, because this gives a more sparkling, effervescent glow; and then Dorus jumps onto your lap.

"Yes, dearest, the three of us."

You have surrendered your sword, and now your scepter follows also. You are dethroned; and the one who makes the laws from now on is the intruder. He shows you a chair: not this one, but the more comfortable one; excellent . . . somewhat closer by, it does not matter . . . and then he sends you to work, weaves dreams around you, and that is the devil of it, puts you even to sleep. He chooses your reading for you. *Treasure Island, Great Expectations, The Moonstone,* adventures, in English, of course, language of the hearth, of winter freshness. You read about the sea, plots, famine, snowdrifts and stolen jewels, while your head is resting comfortably on a down pillow, and you let your legs roast.

That is the degeneration you gradually achieve. Theodorus purrs. Without pangs you hear the wall clock ticking, and when you get up it is only to fill the glowing belly of the moloch with a fresh offering. Months go by, and the famous rhythm you subscribed so heavily to has completely slipped your mind. "Je brule tout l'hiver" has become the focal point of your room.

Until the ice starts to melt, and the breeze from the south acquires a fragrance. Outside you suddenly hear a thrush sing, from a vase on your mantelpiece dangle a few snowdrops, and in front of your window a crocus blooms.

Yes, really . . . but the stove grumbles, rattles and laughs mockingly with the falling sparks. You wipe your moist brow and have to open the windows. And still not before the midsummer sun glows in the blue sky do you dare to come to a decision.

"Yes, come in!"

Theodorus, deathly scared, crawls under the settee.

"Careful now!" and the two pitchblack smith's assistants drag

away your comrade—host, guest—into the hallway, one on each side like the carriers of shields.

"So long," you sigh, sadly left alone, button up your coat and again put your chair in front of your desk.

THE TWO SWANS.

They lived in the pond of an old rundown country house. Their owner, who was a character, called them Marceline and Vondel. Marceline in memory of Madame Desbordes-Valmore, because that poetess had passionately sobbed over betrayed love, had prayed most fervently, and because it had been she who, when she lifted her little daughter Ondine from her bed, felt under the armpits there the beginning of growing wings. He too had lost a woman who had been very dear to him.

As far as the other name of the Dutch poet is concerned, comment seems unnecessary.

The owner of the country estate was not rich; he had no car, no telephone and no radio; he only had a son, a small boy. Therefore he often came to look at the swans, in the summer, in the afternoon, when Vondel, its white feathers folded, let itself float with the breeze on the water, like a legendary barque, and Marceline drifted about along the shore and was caught in the golden maze of sun and shade. He came in the evening, too, in the moonlight, when they were dripping with quivering silver foam to see them rise and flap their wings.

Of course, this seems *vieux jeu,* but, for a lonely dreamer who tried to cure his sorrow, not without charm.

Young Richard fed them early every morning. I am sorry but I cannot avoid mentioning, that he wore his hair in long brown curls and also had a lace collar over his green velvet blouse, that he was pale, short and well behaved; yes, well, he looked like a prince. He called the swans by the names whose significance he still did not understand. They approached confidently. Vondel laid his head in Richard's hands, and Marceline, her neck on his knees, while the little master sat on his haunches.

Every spring for a month, Richard transferred his job of chief bread-distributor to his father. Because then Marceline sat on her five or six eggs, the leaves and branches of an island in the center of the pond, while Vondel, all his feathers bulging, stood guard like an angry Turk. The young never remained long in the spot of their birth.

As soon as they had lost their grey down and begun to glow in

the light of fall, they rose on their beautiful feathered pinions, and disappeared behind the beech woods. One could hear the report of rifle shots in the neighborhood, and whether somewhere else a new colony was ever started is a question nobody can answer.

The child became ill and died. His strange father went away, and because he had also suffered financial losses he wanted to sell the country estate. Nobody put in a bid; there was no road communicating with it, and though the city was gradually extending its western end day by day, foot by foot, it was still at some distance.

The empty house gradually fell into ruin, and the garden became wild. Vondel and Marceline began to know what loneliness was. Sometimes a little girl, who was taken for an idiot by the villagers, brought them the crumbs of her bread but otherwise they had to collect their food from the mud of the pond. They swam in their stately way with proudly upheld necks through the still brown water, perhaps even more beautiful now that nobody was spying on them.

Then there came a winter when Marceline could not disengage herself from the ice of a frosty night and she had to sing her swan song.

Vondel still lives, still fills the region of slumbering foliage, a thoughtful reflection of the grandiose dream vision of his presence, and seems to want to surpass the almost hundred years of his famous namesake by five years or more.

In the neighborhood there runs the fairy tale that he wanted to wait for a solution, one of two: either that the city would reach the country estate, which would be divided up, a network of roads would be built on it, and the pond filled in, in which case he would perish, and his down would be sold; or that the city itself—by a natural disaster, or it might also be through force of arms—would be destroyed, in which case the limits of the park would be extended, and the kingdom of the swan would be established for ever.

THE DOOR.

One of the greatest wonders of childhood is the life of those things about which everybody says that they are dead, their breath, their heartbeat.

Of course, a closet has a face, and the singing tea-kettle is blessed with a voice. But you never feel things living as vividly

around you as when you are in bed at night or have to stay under the covers during the daytime because you are ill. There is nothing which then chooses to remain firmly in its appointed place and does not slink from dusky corners and gather back of where your head rests. The lamp lowers itself like a giant spider along its thread, the flowers of the curtains multiply luxuriously along the walls like the *berceau* of a rococo garden that has grown wild, and covers the edge of your bed.

Everything possesses a soul, but in the whole house there is no presence that turns such a living face upon you as the doors.

There is in the first place the door of the living-room, where you spend a while every day. How many times during the day did you clutch its knob, and that is why the imprint of your nearly unsoiled fingers makes a garland of worship around its keyhole. When it swings creakingly on its hinges, you need not look around to see whom it lets in. The rustling of Mother's skirt you recognize from a thousand other noises, as well as the heavy booted steps of Father.

The porte brisée is more standoffish. White and gilt, it makes one think of a bride, whom you admire from afar, but do not touch. When you pull away its veils and when it opens solemnly, it is the furniture whose company you may enjoy but for a moment. You see somebody get up and nod at you, but before you have been able to make up your mind how you should react toward this unknown smile, and while you plant yourself more firmly on your small legs and stretch out your neck from curiosity, Father and Mother have disappeared and you are left staring again at the snow and gold of the bridal dress.

Then its neighbors, the garden doors. They are more frankly genial. Between the frame that encloses the glass they hold many beautiful promises, and still, when they are rattled open, they give much more than they even promised. In the first place they allow the breeze that is laden with fragrance to blow in, then they make way for the footstep of the sun upon the doormat, and at the same time call in the notes of the finch and the song of the thrush and thus summer steps in with its greens and blues and takes your little hands stretched out in welcoming gesture.

One door only is unmoved by the wish of a child. Stern and forbidding in the dusk, it precedes you into the bedroom and closes with a metallic creaking of its hinges. At the same time it buries the lovely day and buries it irrevocably in the grave from which no dead ever rise. When everything has become dark, it glares at you with the glimmer of a sleepless eye.

Yes, all those doors, but none equals the one of the hundredth gate of the hundred and ninth night of the Arabian tales, I mean the door that you are never allowed to open.

The most fascinating place, wherever you look, is the attic. Like an explorer you wander amid all the secrets of discarded articles of household. From the leaky garden tools you remove the rust; from a tear that is as long as an arm you bring the contents of a mattress to light, you try to climb the moldering rungs of a small stepladder, and on a flagpole you try the giant swing. In the meantime you hear the birds scratching in the gutter and see a spider weave its web between the beams. When you pull the dirty clothes basket aside, and turn an empty box on its side, then you suddenly stand with an accelerated heartbeat before a firmly locked door.

It is simpler than any of those I am in the habit of opening. It is unpainted firwood full of splinters and with a knob of rough iron. How many times did I not climb onto the wobbly little bench and push and pull, without ever being successful. Sometimes Mother surprised me while I was at it. She looked at me frightened, lifted an admonishing finger and shook her head as if she were very worried. Thank God, she had the tact never to disclose to me the secret of what was hidden behind that lock and bolt.

Thus I could imagine behind that forbidden threshold the sleeping princess resting on her bed underneath the thorns, it could hide Ali Baba's forty thieves in their oil vessels, and I could see Bluebeard's wives dangling from their ropes. I sat down on a chair with a broken back and tried to fathom the heart of the silent door. Hours passed that way, apparently aimless, but now I know that I then filled the boxes and trunks with precious things that never lose their value, the jewels of my dreams.

MELODRAMA.

For a short time I had to stay in a foreign city.

One night there, it was already late. . . . I was bored, the noise of the traffic was dying down in the streets. I entered a theater, bought a ticket and purchased a program. I was shown a seat. The first piece, a drama, had already ended; what we were waiting for was the last one, a one-act play by a Russian author, as I read on my program, played by two people, Dimitri and Natasha. They had already raised the large curtain; only two heavy, purple velvet curtains with tassels and fringes at the borders hid the

stage. Three short hard knocks, and the curtains began to separate slowly in a singing sweep. A small part of the stage became visible; a trunk on the floor—it might represent a hotel room—and in the background a window through which one could see high mountain tops that glimmered white as if they were covered with snow. But then something remarkable happened, yes, almost frightening; a man jumped onto the boards from the front, grabbed the curtains that were being pulled aside with his two fists, and tried to pull them toward himself and close them. His face, a savage Danton head, glowed with the effort.

"Stop! No, I don't want it," he shouted toward the side-wings, and still louder and more passionately, as if he answered something that was called to him: "That the sun is shining on the carpet, and that the country people are singing harvest songs as they are coming down the mountain paths, and that a mighty love will bloom, what does that matter when every step I take will bring me closer to the noose, when the gallows is waiting for my neck. I refuse; I won't." And he planted his nails in the velvet folds, that tried to loosen themselves from the spasm of his fright.

Suddenly, the flight of feet, somebody ran toward him who up until now had remained hidden. My heart started to beat, I had never seen such a beautiful woman, half undressed, in her white underthings, a blonde with a braid partially undone on a naked shoulder.

"Come, quiet down," she said, "it is no good, we have to," and carefully she tried to disengage his hand. He shook her loose.

"In order to sit together on the edge of the bed," he said in a choking voice, "and then you say: 'Dearest, my Dimitri, tomorrow we say goodbye forever,' and I answer: 'That isn't allowed, that is not possible, Natasha.' Slowly and emphatically you repeat: that is not possible. And then there will be talk about that trip, the trip of the three of us, you, I and Vladimir, who is your husband. Very soon, this morning. And I explain to you, that the path is steep, even dangerous at one spot. 'Dangerous?' and you look at me with a glance that chills my blood. And in the next scene we have really reached the spot—rocks, snow, and solitude, and—'Vladimir,' I say, 'do you hear the Djiester seething? Bend down and you will see it breaking down there on the cliffs.' And he bends down and I grab him by the back of the neck and hurl him then into the depths. And in the last scene we are again in that room, and we pack our trunks because we are going to leave. O freedom, safety; because we do not know, two poor foolish

blind ones, that the dead Vladimir holds a shred of my blouse, or is it a knot, clutched in his fist, and that the imprint of my five fingers is plainly and deeply visible on his throat. We whisper, because we feel a burden weighing on our hearts. There is a knock. Deathly pale, you rise and open. Three men enter the door, each of them with a revolver in his right hand. I tell you, I refuse, I won't do it."

Like a fly caught in a web he stood between the folds and the tassels convulsively clutching at the curtains with his arms.

"Come on," she soothed, "quiet down," while gently she stroked his hair.

Yes, and you saw it, his grip now became weaker, and suddenly, in a quick gust of wind, the curtains flung open. It was the hotelroom, the sun shone on the carpet, and outside you heard that harvest song. They sit down on the elge of the bed— "Dearest, my Dimitri," she said, "tomorrow we must say goodbye forever." "That can't be, that's impossible, Natasha," he mumbled feebly, and as if with endless effort. At the same time the curtain closed, the spectators rose, after weak applause, and the hall began to empty itself. A strange play.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

P. H. van Moerkerken

PSAMMETICUS PHILOLOGUS

IN THE FIRST PART OF THE SECOND BOOK OF HIS HISTORIES, HERODOtus relates that once upon a time the great and shrewd king Psammeticus devoted himself to the hoary-venerable science of philology. When this monarch became the absolute ruler of Egypt, about the middle of the seventh century before our Christian era, he turned his mind to various matters of spiritual value, among them the knowledge of bygone centuries, the fates of peoples and kingdoms.

In these times the Egyptians fancied themselves the oldest people in the world. And their mighty monarch, whose mind was searching for a clear truth among the faded traditions, believed this, too, when he rode along the rippling banks of the Nile and beheld on the western horizon the mysterious triangles of the thousand-year-old monuments of kings; he imagined it—

and his people too—his subjects, as he roamed with the priests, through the lane of sphinxes at Thebes or stepped beneath the high pillars of their temples. Never had the Greek seamen and Syrian merchants, whom he had met while living in exile in the marshes close to the sea, told him of graves thirty centuries old or of pyramids or granite statues erected by any other people for their heroes and kings.

Yet Psammeticus was in quest of scientific certainty and, since his wisdom embraced a wealth of unknown sources, he knew how, in this historical problem, to obtain help by an experimental method.

From a farmer's family living on a hill between humid Nile fields, he bought their newborn child and took it, together with the young child of one of his mistresses, to a goat-herd, a three-days' journey away, whose hut was in the arid mountains of the Arabian desert. There, in a little shed near the goat stable, royal baby and villager's offspring would be kept by the lonely man, separated from the world. The king bade him never to speak a word in the children's presence and to forbid entrance to the hut, to everyone, be it ruler of the Persians or high priest of Thebes. He was to feed the children with milk from his goats, but otherwise to leave them to themselves.

In this way sagacious king Psammeticus set out to discover what word the children would pronounce first, after the period of confused stammering. That word, he thought, must be a word from the oldest language of the world, spoken by the most ancient people.

The goat-herd, a silent old man who, like all the slaves of those remote times, knew not even the temptation to disobey, took care of the little ones as prescribed by the king; they grew and prospered in the pure air of the lonely mountains, safe from the contagion of children's diseases. They drank the goat's milk and ate a porridge of brittle cakes that was prepared by the old man in a cave behind the shack.

Two years passed. Then . . . but here I must interrupt the history of Herodotus for a little while.

The thoughtful inquisitive mind of that great historian knew a great deal, it is true; but we, who are living twenty-four centuries later, know far more, even about king Psammeticus, although Herodotus traveled to Egypt less than two hundred years after his reign. It is indeed recognized by all present-day historians as a psychological as well as a common logical fact that the greater the time separating us from an individual or a nation

the better we are able to view and understand them. Geerard Brandt in his *Life of Vondel* made errors which have been corrected by our contemporaries. The intimate friends of Rembrandt and Napoleon failed to probe the depths of those titanic souls to such an extent as the history-delvers of our day with the help of old bills and church records, old letters and secret archives. Few poets have given rise to an equally voluminous literature as Shakespeare, of whom we know nothing with reasonable certainty. And should I myself, in all modesty, ever undertake to describe the life of one of my poet friends for the coming generations, I am fully aware that the professor of literature of the twenty-fourth century will condemn and shut away in the stifling narrowness of a nutshell as an unscientific jest or a psychological impossibility many a wondrous anecdote to which I was an eye-witness.

How then could Herodotus have known what were the veritable facts of history—when his spokesmen, the priests of Memphis, Heliopolis, Thebe, were ignorant of them?

A year after Psammeticus had delivered his philological preparation to the lonely goat-herd, a foreign traveler appeared in the midst of the imposing precipices and the scorched-dry desolation of the mountain range. He climbed from granite block to granite block; he found no paths but followed goat tracks, glancing about from ever increasing heights. And many times he stopped to rest. For he was no longer young, and his yellow complexion was not like the tan caused by the burning of the sun or the fierceness of winter-night storms: it was the sallowness of old tallow candles, of soiled parchment, of much unrolled papyrus. He walked with a stooping gait, not like that of a farmer but of a man in search of immaterial things. His right hand grasped a staff—the left held in place a threadbare cloak around his waist; slim were they, these hands, with pallid, pointed fingers. A grizzly beard hung shaggily down over his hollow chest; his unwashed feet shuffled along in dusty sandals.

He came from far off, over sea and over land, from the Phrygian city of Cibyra, which he had never left before. But an Egyptian slave had come to see him in his quiet cell and had shown him the signet-ring of his younger brother who had sailed with Carien pirates to the marshy lands of the Nile estuary. The slave brought back fantastic tales. In the war waged by the pirates in the service of Psammeticus against the eleven other kings of Egypt, the old man's brother had been killed, but a Greek wom-

an, who had followed him from one of the islands, had shortly after given birth to a girl child. This child had been brought up in the royal palace of Memphis. There, four years before the time of which we are speaking, the mighty Psammeticus saw her one evening as she sat staring from the highest arcade over the grey-damp plains to the north. He took her into the women's quarters, where, because of her sparklingly clear mind and intoxicating beauty, she became the monarch's chosen one. A child was born to her, but immediately was taken from its mother's breast by the king himself. After a few months only, Psammeticus, yielding to the girl's constant pleading, had told her of the child's fate. He had taken it, he said, together with a lowly peasant's baby, to the lone mountains where the sun rises, so that he might hear once and for all from these children a word not taught them by human lips but whispered into their deepest being by nature itself, the word which would reveal to the king the language of the oldest people of the world.

The young woman, who still loved the tongue of her Greek parent and, amid the splendor of her surroundings, dreamed of the never beheld country of her ancestors, now sent her most devoted slave to her father's brother, who lived in the town of Cibyra of which a pale youthful recollection still lived on through old tales told by her mother. For a great idea had come to her that night when the king had confessed the purpose of his kidnapping; she wanted the people from which she had sprung glorified as the oldest of the earth, to hear the Phrygian tongue praised as the first spoken by human lips. Therefore she sent the slave to her father's brother, so that he, if still among the living, might carry out the proud though deceitful plan. He must cross the ocean and, in the mountains east of the Nile, search for the lonely hut where the two children were isolated from human language. He must go to them secretly and whisper to them one Phrygian word, which they would learn to stammer as a first greeting and prayer to their keeper and to king Psammeticus. So the old man, at this cry from the heart of a young woman whom he had never seen, started out upon his journey. With moist eyes he closed the little cell in which, among learned scriptures, he had roamed through worlds of beauty and knowledge and wisdom for half a century. The voice of his blood was calling him, the pride of his country's tongue.

He sat down on a rock on the edge of the precipice and his eyes sought a well, for his thirst was great after the long hours of wearisome climbing in the heat of the shadowless slopes. But

his gaze found no luscious green of dew-soaked meadows, no waving tree tops; only grey nettles and sun-scorched grasses sprouted out of the thin layer of earth that covered the rocks here and there.

Then he heard from far off the sound of the little herd bells and saw, high up, the goats grazing in the sparse grass. Filled with new hope he continued on his way, craving to drink their milk.

Suddenly, at the foot of a perpendicular wall full of caves he perceived a rustic hut. And he pondered: could it be there? Where else? . . . For here he had found the first glimpse of life after days of roaming through desolate wilderness. . . .

The mouldering door fell open under the pressure of his trembling hand but, blinded by the scorching heat of the barren rocks, he saw nothing but darkness inside.

He listened. Outside sang the far-off bells of the herd; but from a corner of the somber shack came the plaintive wail of a child.

The grey Phrygian stepped back. He feared discovery by the herdman; secretly, with utmost caution, he had to bring his niece's proud plan to reality, he who knew nothing but the deeds of the mind and the contemplative life. He must watch the children's keeper, find out the hours when he drove forth the herds and when he brought them back, so that he might then approach the little creatures undisturbed and teach them the first word of a human tongue.

He hid in a narrow, elevated cave. He lured a goat to him and refreshed himself with her milk; he ate the hard bread which he had brought with him from the last village on the border of the desert. And for three days he remained there, spying from the obscurity of his cave the pursuits of the lonely herdman.

He knew now that the entrance to the hut would be safe from morning to evening. On the fourth day he left the shadow of his rock and entered the hut, feeling his way to where he had heard the vague, childish sounds. His hands were still trembling, for he was about to deceive the mighty ruler of all Egypt.

He offered the children bread covered with sweet dried fruits —and when they grabbed it with their tiny hands, and he thought he recognized in the noble face of the frailest of the two the features of his long-lost brother, tears welled up in the eyes of the lonely scholar.

In a soft voice he spoke a word, the first word that had reached the children's ears: "Bekós."

And he repeated, pointing to the bread: "Bekós, bekós."

They were silent, but stared at him with wondering eyes.

And for days on end, during many weeks he came to them, speaking the same word, always that one word. They tried, still awkward and inept of tongue, to repeat the word as soon as the old sage began to search in the pockets of his cloak for the sweet tid-bit. In those still days spent in meditation, the yearning for the short hours with the children became stronger and stronger. His sallow face lighted up with a smile at the happy gestures and strange cries of the little ones. And the approaching hour of parting filled him with sadness.

Yet the last day came, for he knew that they would soon cry out the strange word to the goat-herd and that he would report it to the king. For the first time in his life the Phrygian scholar kissed a child's face and, for the first time also, children's hands stroked his grizzly, disheveled beard.

Then he wearily descended by the loose rocks northward in the direction of the big cities in the plain.

Two years had passed—thus Herodotus resumes his story—since the lonely goat-herd had received the children from the king's hands.

Then, one morning as he opened the door of the hut, the children crawled over their straw bed to meet him and, their tiny arms outstretched, cried: "Bekós!"

He paid no heed to their sounds for he did not understand them. But when they greeted him with the same sounds for many succeeding mornings, he went off to inform the king, who bade him bring the children to him.

Now Psammeticus heard with his own ears the outlandish word. From the seaport towns at the Nile estuary he summoned to the palace merchants of many foreign lands and questioned them about the significance of those childish sounds. Finally a Phrygian traveler, an old stooped man wrapped in a drab cloak, told him that the word "bekós," in the language of his country, meant bread. And Lydian sailors of King Gyges confirmed this.

Satisfied with this philological research by the outcome of his experiment, King Psammeticus let it be known to his wives and to all his Egyptians, to the priests, the soldiers, the artisans and the merchants, that the Phrygian people was the oldest of the world.

On the following evening, the loveliest and youngest of the

women smiled in a cryptic manner as she folded her arms around Psammeticus' head. And the grey-headed linguistic scholars of Alexandria bestowed upon the great king the title of doctor of etymology, "sagacitatis causa."

Translated by PAULINE BUKOVSKA

Gerard van Eckeren

PAST

THE GLASS REVOLVING DOOR, TURNED BY THE DOORMAN, HAD LANDED them inside, and she stood for a moment at the entrance to the lunchroom searching with her eyes over the moving heads of many eating and talking people for an empty table. Then, resolutely, with a melodious "pardon" to a stout gentleman behind a wiener schnitzel, she shot across to the window side, laid her parasol and handbag on the white table cloth and stripped off her gloves. Following her, more cumbersomely—why were there suddenly all kinds of legs in his way and why did a little table of giggling schoolgirls who sat poring over their afternoon lessons, stand across his path?—he felt a smile spreading under his mustache. That was his sister all over: "the bee line"! She took it in her marriage, the bringing-up of her children, the training of her servants, even in the manner in which she steered to a seat in a tea-room.

Sitting opposite her at the open window overlooking the sunny shopping street where the loud sounds of rattling carts and trolleys running along rails mixed with the fine tinkling of bicycle bells clamoured past them, he continued with a broadening smile to watch her as, with the movements of a spruce little woman, she made herself more comfortable, unbuttoned her coat, indicated to a passing white-jacketed waiter that he should add two or three dirty plates from previous customers to his already high heap of used crockery and then let the pink little nail of her right forefinger wander hastily down the endless menu from top to bottom—to Assorted Ices; after which the finger shot up again, wavered for a moment in the middle of the card like a compass needle, finally to rest with a very determined pressure on the paper.

"For me just a small salmon salad. For you too?"

He nodded. Menus were his abomination; despite his bachelor life he still did not know his way about on them any better than in a Hebrew Bible.

"Two coffees?"

He nodded again and stared dreamily out of the window along the bluish smoke of his cigarette, while she gave her orders to the little black and white waitress.

In this street he had walked as a boy with a pile of books under his arm, coming home from the grammar school. Nothing seemed changed; or, yes, the trolleys were electrified, the sociable, jolting vehicle with a horse in front had long disappeared; but look! that hat shop opposite was still the same: the old firm-name still glittered in the same gold block letters on the glass pane, and the little man with the curly head who stepped to the open door with a pile of Borsalinos and let his brush dance over them was the same little man that had sold him his caps and, toward summer—a great event!—his first brand new straw hat. . . .

There it was again, that strange feeling! Something in him sank, a melancholy which did not smart; it rather resembled a sweet, faint pain. And in the crowded room, there was bright reality. She told him in a matter-of-fact voice about Kitty who had met a young man at her dancing lesson. . . .

"You see, you understand. . . . I have talked to Evert about it, and he too finds the child far too young. The boy hasn't a job yet, no prospects. Oh well! fortunately the dancing lessons are now stopping for the summer, and Kitty's tennis club is full; no new members are being admitted there. So I hope that for the time being the danger is over. . . ."

She remained silent, preparing her salmon salad with care.

"Wait a minute. Let me help you. Men do these things so clumsily. . . ."

She exchanged the plates; like an obedient boy he pushed his toward her.

"And how does Kitty feel about it?" he asked in order to say something.

"Well, you know . . . bitter tears. . . . Do you want salt and pepper?"

He nodded slowly, his thoughts with his fair-haired niece who could laugh so boisterously. Well, yes, Emily was right.

Then he asked: "Do you realize that this is the town where we used to live as children? The same houses, the same paving stones. . . ."

She looked up from her plate and glanced round the room for a fleeting moment.

"Eh? What's that? Oh, yes, funny, isn't it? But this place did not exist then. Well, I find it an improvement. . . ."

"No, you girls used to go to an ordinary confectioner's when you had a treat after an exam or something like that. . . ."

"Yes. At the corner of Cock's Alley. There was such a good one there! And we poked our hat pins in to see if there was cream inside!"

She laughed a gay laugh that reminded him of earlier days. She now realized the situation fully. Then, again practical, she asked: "Have you a timetable? I think it would be awfully nice to go for a little walk along the ramparts with you—it happens so rarely that I have my cosmopolitan brother so quietly to myself, doesn't it?—but I don't want to get back to Amsterdam too late. The maids don't do a stroke of work when I am away, and for the children it is so unsociable if I am not at home for tea. The purpose of our trip has been achieved now; I find we have managed very well with that carpet, don't you?"

He turned the pages of the little book and moved his head a little; it was meant as an affirmation.

They had gone to G. together early that morning, as delegates of the brothers and sisters. "William has taste" had been the verdict "and so has Emmy. Besides, a man can't do a thing like that by himself; he only looks at the colors and design; for the quality it is as well if a woman is there too." And that is how it came that they—oh, rare occurrence!—now sat together in G. where was the store for carpets of the kind their mother wanted as a present for her seventieth birthday.

"Strange that they never have so much choice in Amsterdam as here."

"That is because the main store is here. The factory is here, too. What do you think of the 3.05?"

She did not answer. She had pressed the last leaf of lettuce together with the last little piece of pink salmon neatly with her fish-knife onto her fork and made it disappear between her full lips. Then, putting her fork and knife down on her plate, she pulled her chair a little nearer to the table and cupped her cheeks in her small hands. Then she looked at him, resting her elbows on the edge of the table.

"And?" she asked. Her long lashes blinked slowly over her dark eyes.

"And?" He smiled back, not quite comprehending. And yet a

vague uneasiness welled up in him; he gently flapped the time-table on the marble in front of him, then put his hand into his inner pocket to take another cigarette from his case.

"Well, what we talked about last time. How do matters stand now?"

"You mean . . ." he groped, uncertain.

"That short story that you were going to write . . . for the Family Album. Have you got anything yet? It is getting time. . . ."

Immediately he stiffened.

"I have already told you that I must ask to be excused. Really, Emmy, I can't. I have no subject and no inspiration. Whatever you like, but to work to order like that for an occasional album —that is nothing for me. Believe me, I would not be able to produce anything passable."

She continued to look at him from between her hands, an urging, compelling glance.

"Not even if it is for your seventy-year-old mother?"

His glance tried to escape the ban of her compelling eyes by turning to the street.

"Not even then," he said shortly.

She began speaking hastily, whispering, her voice cracking hoarsely occasionally with the strain of keeping her quickly rising indignation within the bounds of a subdued conversation.

"Then I'll tell you what it is: a lot of nonsense. Selfish love of ease and vanity. Yes, even if you are already shaking your head, I insist: it is vanity; you are afraid to compromise your name as a writer in an album in which girl cousins and boy cousins write down their well-meant little inanities. You are afraid that your piece will not show up too well in comparison; that what you write *about* and *for* your mother will be disappointing. They are all contributing. Jimmy has drawn something; Kitty I helped so long with her water-color motto till she . . . till. . . ."

"Till she wept bitter tears," he said sharply, spitefully. Immediately he regretted it.

"Your brother Nout has written a lovely, witty poem, and he is only a notary public. But you, the *famous author,* William Veenhorst! . . ."

"You need not say that so scornfully and emphatically. Besides, I am not famous."

"Well then, well-known. Everyone can do something, and everyone does. Only the well-known author William Veenhorst

can't scrape together even a little sketch or story out of love for his old mother. I find that . . ."

"I will not and cannot 'scrape something together'! That's just it, Emmy; please understand!"

His voice was gentle, almost imploring. He laid his hand on her sleeve. "And hadn't we better go now? I don't find a lunch-room the place . . . outside on the ramparts we can talk much better. Or shall we first have a whipped cream puff, eh?"

But she pulled her arm away impatiently.

"Thank you. I don't want to start it all over again. When I do something I finish it all in one go" (the bee line, he thought sarcastically) "and that is what I want to do in this case too. So you won't participate. All right, I shall tell them. What they will think, I don't know. But what I think of it, I'll tell you. In one word I find it *mean.*"

"Then," he said icily, "we have no more to say to one another for the moment. I'll go and pay at the buffet. Goodbye. . . ."

Her anger subsided immediately. With something of dismay in her look, still dark with vexation and regret, she glanced at him.

"Then, at least, wait till I . . . And we wanted to . . ."

"I no longer feel like a walk along the ramparts under the circumstances. And you didn't want to get home too late, did you?"

He stood close to her for a moment and his voice sounded milder. "Believe me, Emmy, we had better part now. The walk won't run away, and we'll have a talk another time. I wanted to call on my friend Termeer. He will probably be at home still. You can take my timetable along. Kind regards to Evert and the children. . . ."

He waved a goodbye and walked slowly to the door; looked round once again, waved again to where she sat at her table, taut with surprise, fumbling at her handbag. Apparently she did not notice his farewell.

In the street he sauntered on thoughtlessly for a few moments, stood still in front of a shop and stared at the articles displayed there without seeing them. The summer was so sultry around him at this early hour in the afternoon; above him, the sun was burning in the blue sky; somewhere at the back of his head was still his sister's urgent whispering, like the noise of a distant waterfall. He felt dull and crushed, heavy and sad. Then, while

he walked along the pavement a little more energetically, he caught himself expecting to hear her spruce little steps clattering behind him; he immediately slackened his pace. But although people came up behind him and passed him, his sister was not among them.

And then he suddenly resumed his pace. It was better so. The conversation again stood out clearly in his mind. "Mean" she had said—a word she certainly was already repenting. But had he behaved meanly toward her? Go back, express his regret? Tell her that he would try it after all? . . . Oh no, he had better leave it alone. Should he think it over again, how and what? Now better go on to Termeer. It would distract him a little after this disagreeable business.

It appeared that his old schoolmate was not at home; gone abroad, the maid told him. He walked idly through his native town; a spider-web of narrow streets round the old market square where the St. Jacobus church, gray and weathered by the ages, rose above the irregular roofs of low houses. The lace-work of the ancient spire hung like the petrified beards of grim mountain gods; the bells, green with age, hung in the black holes, and the freshly gilded dial-plates that indicated the time in all four directions shone in the midst of this gray venerability like fair gimcracks in a museum of antiquities. Of course, they were again busy restoring—had he ever seen this tower without the poor cloak of wooden planks? A workman, a little black figure from a toy box, looking very small, moved at the distant heights. He remained standing, while the bells tinkled slowly and laboriously, as if an inexperienced and unsure hand was turning a musical box. Like jingling coins, thoughtlessly scattered, the sounds fell on the patient houses with their stepped gables and dainty festoons, out of a time when builders were still artists.

A large modern dress shop had arrived, brutally hacked into the broad front of old houses on the south side; much brass, French polish and glass. Expressionless wax ladies displayed a crazy coquetry in the somber cast-shadow of the ages.

Through a narrow side street he reached the river with its rattling bustle of unloading and loading. The sun glistened on the water with the cold sharpness of polished steel; a departing freight boat snorted out a cloud of dirty yellow smoke into the blue quivering air. In front of the weighing-house purple-jacketed fellows were throwing greasily shiny cheeses from one to the other, as in a monotonous game of ball; on the slope wagoners cursed as they drove their horses: the cobblestones emitted sparks.

A barrel organ was snoring a whining tune on the other side under the young green of a row of trees. Dreamily he watched the dexterous ball-game with the cheeses; sniffed the sour smell of pigs; looked at where the grocery store once stood that had so often received the bashful boy with his satchel full of books and his heart full of fear about the algebra sums which he again did not know and which the patient fair-haired schoolmate up there tried again and again in his rather weary, meek voice to explain. . . . On a sailing trip years later his boat capsized and he was drowned.

Walking on, he mused on his life as a full-grown man in St. Petersburg, in Paris, where he had been sent by his newspapers. For a moment it seemed to him as if he were walking in the spacious remoteness of the Place de la Concorde, with cars rushing past him at a dangerous pace; then there was the pleasant, fashionable crowd of the Rue de Rivoli at teatime; voluble French rattled at his ears; he lunched on the Boul' Mich' at Harcourt's with Bihi, the proper little working girl who seemed so affectionate and yet deceived him.

Suddenly he stood by the little medieval canal in front of the House; his feet had carried him there, and he wasn't astonished, for it had to be so. He smiled as if he had come home from a long journey and the feeling overcame him as of someone who, after a tiring trip, does not realize until then how fatigued he is. He leaned against the iron railing and let his eyes wander over what was old and familiar to him. He was in a small provincial town that did not mark the passage of time. The water between the dusty embankments lay green and nacreous in the depths; a bridge with white painted balustrades led to the metaphorical perspective of a little street, like the primitive background of a vaudeville. He put his foot onto the stone steps of the house and laid his hand on the brass bell-button. He was a schoolboy, coming home hungry. The door would open and he would sniff the smell of roast meat and dried apples. His gray father was clattering in the hall closet, about to change his boots.

The door yielded and an old woman looked at him inquiringly.

"Did you ring?"

Yes, he had rung.

"Is . . .," he stammered.

"This is the club-house of pensioned sergeants," the woman anticipated him, slightly snappy. Then, apparently under the impression of the cut of his jacket—cut by Jean Délibart from

the Rue Saint Honoré—she inquired more gently: "Have you perhaps a message?"

And suddenly he understood that he really had a message; that he had come here to fulfill a mission.

"Madam," his voice still sounded a little unsure, "I have come to . . . view the house."

"It can't be viewed," she put him off promptly. Then again recovering submission to the cut-Délibart, Rue Saint Honoré, she explained:

"It is not to let, you see."

He nodded meditatively, realizing the strangeness of the situation . . . for her.

"And yet I'd like to see the house," he said, more to himself, "You see, I used to live here; twenty-five years ago."

Still the woman hesitated.

"That's a long time," she nodded, "my late husband used to say: Time, he'd say, does not stand still. He'd say . . ."

"So you understand that I am attached to this house; I should very much like to see it again, if only for five minutes."

Only on one other occasion had such power of persuasion rung in his voice. That somber December noon in the private room of his chief in Rotterdam, who had wanted to transfer him to London at a time when he wanted to stay in Paris at all costs—on account of a woman who deceived him. . . .

But the little woman at the door had already yielded. "Well, all right then, because it's you. . . ."

He crossed the threshold and entered the coolness of the marble passage, slightly astonished not to find the big table in it with the green plants, the pride and care of his mother.

"This," the woman explained opening the room on the right and letting him in, "is so to say the reception room for the majors who play dominoes in the evenings, you understand?"

He nodded absent-mindedly. How could he get rid of her? But she anticipated his wishes. "I should like to show the whole house," she hesitated, "but, you see, it is Friday and washing day." She looked at him uncertainly.

"You just go along," he said hastily, "I'll just walk round, if I may."

Two tooth-stumps became visible in the grinning little mouth. "Of course! There are no pitfalls here. Go right along."

Amiable and grateful, he nodded her out of the room.

He was alone. Through the drawn Holland curtains the summer sun poured a yellowish light on the bare tables and benches

that stood where his father's writing table, book-cases and sofa used to stand. He saw a quiet figure in sober black moving in front of the wide rows of classics, and searching white hands moving caressingly along the shelves edged with strips of green flannel.

> My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
> Half asleep, half waking; but as yet, I swear
> I cannot truly say I came here. . . .

Was that not the voice of Shakespeare who spoke there, Shakespeare's Lysander from *Midsummer Night's Dream*?

> We the globe can compass soon
> Swifter than the wandering moon. . . .

What was Time, Space, a human life? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. And yet . . . was it not as if the atmosphere of this bare room was still peopled with the spirits of all ages: Shakespeare, Tennyson, Homer, and Goethe? With all changes, with all things that grow weary and dull, was it not the spirit that, everlasting and unchanging, remains the same? "I shall be who I shall be. . . ."

He left the room and walked down the long passage; there in the round alcove near the kitchen he used to stand when he was "he," when they played at touch as children. In that little side room he used to drum his lessons and his catechism into his head. He climbed a stair in the back part of the house and wandered through empty lofts, lumber attic, play attic. Here the tin knights errant still gave their childish performances. Surely on this rusty nail the curtain used to be fixed that separated the nervous and often itching artists from the yawning public.

Back in the passage, he opened the door next to his father's wardrobe. (No doubt there now hung the uniform and dress-sword of one or another sergeant-major) and stood at the foot of the steep steps leading upstairs. As he climbed, a step creaked as of old. He wandered through the bedrooms, after a preliminary modest tap at each door; there was some scrapped furniture; somewhere stood an iron shake-down. He climbed still higher to the attic, the loft, and looked out of the dormer window, down to the quiet canal. The old trees carried their fresh green like flowery bouquets. A little girl, a small white figure, was skipping at the water's edge.

Downstairs again he opened the door to the suite at the back of the house. Here was the room overlooking the garden, the heart of the house. There a table used to stand, and there the stove, and over there his mother's little book-case full of old-fashioned writings, among which "Little John" was his first acquaintance with modern literature. And in that corner, the piano. Emily sat in front of it, practising her Heller studies. No, it was his mother, and she was singing. The room was half dark and the golden candlelight flooded her dear face. Her short-sighted eyes stared at the sheet of music and her hands moved a little helplessly over the keys, but her voice sounded like that of a nightingale, so clear and pure in the listening stillness.

He pushed up a window and sat down on one of the wide window-seats, staring into the garden. Not much of it had remained; factory sheds stood where their sand-heap had once been. He folded his hands and sat still a long time. He thought of his mother and of a girl he had loved and watched a little bird that sat rocking itself in a shrub. The sinking sun shone on a piece of weathered wall with ivy upon it, and above in the sky floated the rarefied sounds of the St. Jacobus chimes. Time held its breath, shrank away till it met Eternity and then only the Everlasting survived. They were all as they had always been, and it seemed to him as if he had always known that he would find his dear ones here again. He had known it, in St. Petersburg and in Paris, in the autumns when he had walked along the Champs Elysées under the dying yellow of the autumn trees, in the gay nights on Montmartre and in Montparnasse, with Bibi in St. Cloud, and in the bitter loneliness of his room when she had deserted him. They were all assembled here and awaiting him: his deceased father, his mother, his sisters and brothers, the girl he had loved.

The little bird, tired of rocking, flew up, but another bird immediately took its place. The sun, which lay on the shrubs like golden powder, pierced shining edges along the somber leaves of the ivy. The St. Jacobus chimed again and by degrees he learned to distinguish the feeble little air:

"What God does is done well."

He thought also of the wise man of the Paviljoensgracht, the optician and of his motto: Bene agere et laetari.

Then the door opened and on the threshold stood his sister. Behind her the caretaker's wife made an embarrassed, apologetic gesture.

"You here, William?"

"You here, Emmy? And I thought . . ."

"That I wanted to be home early, eh? And I did, too. But I missed my train, and then . . ."

She walked up to him and put her hands on his shoulders.

"Do you know, I have always longed just once more in this house. . . . But I could not have imagined that . . ."

He had risen and threw his arms round her.

"Emmy, forgive me. . . ."

"Forgive you, boy? I know very well that I . . ."

But he did not let her finish. "And do you know," he whispered kissing her, "I have found my subject."

Translated by Jo MAYO

Top Naeff

THE FRIEND

WHEN I THINK BACK TO THE LITTLE TOWN, I SEE BEFORE ME TWO houses, theirs and ours. All the streets of my memory terminate there, and in my mind's eye rises the façade of their home, monumental and engraved like a memorial plaque. . . . It was a grey, square structure with two windows on either side of the granite steps and a row of five above. The brass trim of the black front door, shining as gold, and the evenly hanging shades whose scalloped borders just touched the lower curtains of linen lace, gave evidence to the outside world of the prosperity and the sense of orderliness of the inhabitants.

Only on Sundays, when the white-capped maid was allowed to look at the passers-by from behind the window of the reception room, was the neatness of these curtains slightly disturbed; and the glow of the open fireplace in the drawing-room on the other side of the front door, where the lady of the house received her visitors, sparkled through the lacework, making the little figures, a knight on the left, a lady on the right, stand out as if modeled by the fire. To those standing on the steps, waiting in the wintry twilight, while the deep sound of the doorbell faded away behind the front door, it gave a feeling of comfort which, on entering, would be enhanced by the delicate fragrance which distinguished Conny's drawing-room from all others in town. That

fragrance seemed to radiate from her mild, well-balanced personality and somehow imparted itself to everything that surrounded and belonged to her; the inner warmth of her being filled the room. She did not wait for a visitor to enter; she went to meet him and ushered him in, and each visitor's importance rose by her way of welcome, as she convincingly put her hand into his as though it were a gift. "Come, sit down next to me," she would urge, and her eyes would have the misty gleam of a longing which seemed ever present in them. And, in the conversation that followed, no matter who or what held her attention, she seemed completely absorbed. "Conny," her husband used to say in a jocular way, "shares a secret with each and every one," and that actually meant almost everyone in town, from the proud young lieutenant to old Daatje who was everybody's aunt and slightly given to drink. And it was curious to see that each person seemed to have the feeling of being the special favorite, and nobody felt slighted by the favors given to a predecessor. She found exactly the right tone for everyone, knew how to kindle the tender spark of interest, and I was often astonished at her faculty of remembering all the events and all the relations of those mixed crowds. In her crystal-clear memory every event seemed indelibly engraved; whatever she promised, she fulfilled; no detail escaped her. She had the broad smile of those who understand by intuition; she had eyes that always gave and never requested. . . . And this sympathetic quality was so much a part of her that the thought of special intention or affectation on her part never occurred to anyone.

Even now I still do not believe that she consciously followed a certain pattern of behavior; I believe that Conny, indifferent within, barricaded herself behind conscientious outward efforts, her face a fitting mask. A delicately cut mask it was, unreal like the impression in wax of a dead friend, strangely familiar, aloof and yet glowing, and of a loveliness seen through a veil. It has delighted many people and to me it was a priceless possession. For, although through the many years of our friendship she never allowed me—just as little indeed as her husband—a glimpse into her own inner life, I never felt this to be a shortcoming or an obstacle in our association. Everything about Conny, even the things that sometimes puzzled me, seemed at the time as they should have been and, to be absolutely frank, they appear so even now. At any rate, I have never regretted my, well, somewhat naive devotion to her, to the woman she pretended to be, and I would never think of setting the friendly confidence, which I

willingly made to her, against the hostile secret which she, under the disguise of intimacy, kept from me.

There are people who can wear their heart on their tongue as a jewel, while others have to hide it as a treasure. I myself belong to the category called "an open book," and for a long time I considered this a privilege and a tribute. Now that I am fifty years old, in good health and a cheerful companion for my aging mother, I am still praised for this quality. "With Marie you know exactly what's what," is the verdict of my numerous acquaintances, but I for myself see matters in a different light. I believe that frankness may give a certain comfort but that it can never be a luxury . . . and this is perhaps the only conclusion which I, who have always appeared exactly as I am, have decided to keep from my relatives and friends, at least for the time being. That frankness, moreover, resulted in a "simplicity of soul," as our minister calls it, to which everybody as well as myself has become accustomed, and now that I am getting older I do not wish to lose it. It is to this day a part of my vanity, because it goes so well with my appearance, stout as I was to start with and growing definitely heavy with the years. Always straight to the point . . . I look the part!

Constance Grashorst and I were of the same age, that is to say, she was a young woman and I an aging spinster when we both approached forty. Her exact age I learned only recently from the official death notice. She always used to say laughingly, "Une femme de trente ans remains that age. It's just like smuggling over the border." She had a vague dislike for her birthday. On that day, February 12, I was usually the only guest. Her husband wanted no strangers around! From the time that I was called her friend, however, she had urged, Let me ask Marie; because Marie was no stranger. . . . In my memory this date hangs in a flowery wreath. And on each February 12 I see myself and the family gathered at the table, abounding with food and set as if for a banquet: the person whose birthday it was sitting opposite her husband, the boys, white-collared, together at the lower end, myself, in my black and white checkered blouse, broad and talkative, at the upper end . . . a parapet indeed! I can still see the smile and the tender look in her eyes, as she gazed over the heads of the boys, while Grashorst, his glass raised, commemorated their Mama's birthday in a little toast. The words were always the same, arranged slightly different each time, and it seemed to me that even the emphasis, which brought a certain warmth to his

voice, was always on the same syllable. He exalted her virtues as a wife and mother, thanked her for her devotion to her household, recalled days of sickness and once more wished her happiness, also on behalf of the children, the relatives, the friends, "represented here by our friend Marie."

The little carillon of clinking glasses set in promptly and, as the tense quiet was broken, I felt that I was taken into the intimacy of this happy family. Tactfully I glanced the other way when Conny rose and offered her cheek to her husband for the official birthday kiss, and without jealousy I looked on while Ewald and Jopje, with their glasses of red-tinted water, tiptoed behind their mother's chair, quickly set down their glasses and put their arms around her neck, both at the same time, with an ardor resembling fury, as if they were storming a fortress. I wanted Conny to have all the joys of this world and thought that they were her rightful due; but towards the end of such a day, when we were sitting together in the living-room, as in a spring garden, I sometimes had to tell her, "You know, Conny; it's really a shame that you, of all people, have the nerve to look down on birthdays." She would nod and look at me with her dream eyes and, though she acknowledged my reproof, suddenly looked tired. . . .

Our friendship—at any rate that's what it was on my part, the only friendship my heart has ever felt—our friendship dated back to a winter when a few children, including Ewald Grashorst, were to give a performance of a fairytale for the benefit of the local Poor Relief. I was then a member of the board of that organization and in that capacity I met Mrs. Grashorst at one of the rehearsals. Hand in hand with her son, who was dressed in a page's costume, she walked up to me. The boy bowed from the waist as he had just learned; the long blue feather on his beret touched my hand and briefly tickled my nose as I bent down. The mother smiled, blushing a little as if she wanted to beg my indulgence for her impetuous cavalier. I stayed with her for the rest of that afternoon and afterwards I often found excuses to sneak off into the rehearsal room, a world in itself and to me a world of marvelous enchantment.

Then it came to pass that she had to take over the role of the fairy, in place of the colonel's daughter, who had fallen ill. I shall never forget how almost supernaturally fair and lovely she was on that night, as she came out from behind the dark chimneypiece, all aglitter with spangles. She was the answer to all that fancy has woven around fairies. The children gazed at her be-

witched as at a genuine apparition, while the mothers and fathers sat in breathless wonder. She was truly a fairy-godmother. And how charming, in a different way now, come back to earth, a happy, sweet human being, she appeared at the end of the performance, as she received flower tributes brought to the stage by the pages, in the full glow of the footlights. More flowers and still more: her hands could not hold all the abundance, her feet were buried in waves of lilacs; Ewald had to take the golden sceptre from his mother, so flower-laden was she!

Was she overcome by all this homage or only timidly happy? She buried her head with the imposing sugar-loaf hat in the roses. Her delicate chin, her quivering, smiling mouth, disappeared. Only her eyes, all tenderness, still shone above the flowers. They wandered through the hall over the long rows of people; over my nodding head and clapping hands, over the many admiring faces, among which I discovered, in the front row, the bald pate of her husband, they fixed themselves on one point. Surely, at that moment she must have been filled with happiness. A happiness that not everyone can approach.

From that night on I grasped every opportunity to meet Constance Grashorst again: even to the point of taking over from her a complicated and perfectly useless secretaryship. Homely women are sometimes partial to beautiful ones, and vice-versa, provided there is enough difference between them to make competition impossible. Thus, in the shadow of a pretty or outstanding woman one may often find an ill-favored friend, such as the "nurse" in old-time tragedies. And when I recall the old days of our friendship, it seems to me that we approached this classic prototype fairly closely.

My admiration, which in the beginning was held within timid bounds and which I nursed tenderly and adroitly during the period that followed, led gradually to a relationship which the outside world called intimate. Although I was fully aware that Conny, had it not been for a few chance circumstances mostly brought about by myself, would never have chosen me, I was careful to make our relationship appear to others as ideal as the friendship of Castor and Pollux. More enjoyable even than being in the house with her was taking a walk together, and when, in the evening, I entered our club room in the wake of her high heels, I marched like a conqueror.

The Grashorst family was an institution in town, the "beautiful Mrs. Grashorst" almost a celebrity. Whenever the foursome appeared, the tall, distinguished man—honorary chairman or at

least patron of every organization—his graceful wife, dressed like no one else, the princely looking boys, a smile of affection went around. They simply belonged to the town. And until they had taken their seats in a public hall, restlessness prevailed in the ranks. Once in a while an envious acquaintance spoke in my presence of the "royal court," and this increased my self-importance. I have never been able to find out exactly what was Conny's attitude toward that universal admiration: whether she accepted it as her birthright, to what extent it flattered her and how indispensable it became. Nor did I ever get an insight into the character of her feelings toward myself. I never overestimated my value and I knew her to be a blind philanthropist. . . . Perplexingly good and affectionate she was to me throughout many years, and never in a way that seemed to me condescending. She had the talent to be good, to grasp the happiness of the moment for herself and others. In the upbringing of her children she demanded above all the right to give them pleasure, not the sort of pleasure that was thought good for them, but the pleasure to which they clung, with the passionate tenacity of children. Laughingly, against all reason, she would defend that heavenly right. She would go through a great deal of trouble just to hear them chuckle. . . . And to think of all the things she invented to keep up my morale in the years of balance, to fill my empty days, to turn my heart away from that which passed it by . . . !

I sincerely believe that the day on which my father told me that he had bought the house next to that of the Grashorsts was the greatest day of my life. The surprise at this almost inconceivably good fortune, the joy that was like entering a new world, the excitement which made me ignore all my principles of modesty and run right over to Conny . . . I can still feel them in my stiff limbs when I think back to that time. The distance in age between my parents and myself had not been diminished as the years went by; regardless of my ample shape, I remained in their eyes the child, the minor, uninitiated into any of life's happenings until Mama and Papa had agreed fully about it. And so I enjoyed this arrangement with all my heart.

Everything about our new home, even its discomforts, seemed delightful to me: the little garden with northern exposure where no rose would bloom was admired by me because of its low fence, the picturesque remains of a pigeon house on the lawn. . . . And my own room, painted white, full of fussy furnishings, among which I walked with resolute steps, arranging all the pieces with loving care, while humming a tune in falsetto voice. On each

little gilt chair, on the daisy-pattern of my tiny sofa, my mind's eye saw her sitting down and her face smiling at me so sweetly from the golden frame of my Louis XVI mirror long before she actually came. . . . And when at last she was there, the first afternoon, and drank tea from the cup that was different, especially intended for her, this was to me an apotheosis, a complete fulfillment.

Living so close to her was all I had hoped and expected and even more. For, by way of exchanging little neighborly courtesies and services, I had an opportunity to become better acquainted, in a natural way, with the less accessible, more formal Mr. Grashorst too. And one fine day, the boys started calling me "aunt," This became the bridge for the father, leading from Miss van Drunen by way of Aunt Marie to Marie pure and simple. And I called him Grashorst, just as Conny did in talking about him. I came to their house in the morning, the afternoon and evening, under all circumstances, but never on my own initiative. However, the least encouragement, impatiently looked forward to and immediately taken up, was sufficient for me. Without this encouragement I did not have courage. . . . And perhaps it was my instinct that led me, the same instinct that brings a dog back to the right track, that keeps a sleepwalker from falling, the so-called sixth sense which failed me for all other purposes.

Somewhat peculiar and, I should almost call systematic, was Conny's way of inviting me: the time of coming and going was regulated by the clock, and I complied intuitively with an equally strict observance of precision. Taking a walk together at three o'clock meant that I rang her door bell on the stroke of three. Conny planned the walk, which was just long enough for the allotted time. In the evening she invited me either for tea, that is to say: at eight; or for after tea-time, which meant not before nine. And when I was asked to come for dinner, which was usually every other Sunday, the invitation implied that I should not put in an appearance in the afternoon, as I did on the alternate Sundays when Conny held her reception and I called at four to pour the tea.

On the dinner Sunday there was usually one other guest at Conny's table, Mr. Alting Reys, mayor of one of the villages across the river. He was a boyhood friend of Grashorst's, but their friendship of many years standing had suffered an interruption following Alting Reys's ill-advised marriage to a peasant girl. After some time, however, mostly through Conny's efforts, because she rather liked Alting, the two men patched up their

friendship. But their relationship remained somewhat strained. He came regularly to town without his wife and visited a few friends, among whom were the Grashorsts. This, however, did not prevent Conny from occasionally taking the ferry to pay a visit to the wife and children. Grashorst, who was a director of a large banking house and was kept at his office until five, never accompanied her on those trips. On Alting's visits to their home, his wife was never, the children rarely, mentioned, and it seemed evident that this was arranged by mutual consent. Somehow I never asked Conny about it and I finally arrived at the conclusion that seemed logical in the light of both personalities, namely, that Grashorst was only partly reconciled, while Conny took the whole thing lightly and, in the warmth of her heart, sided with the mayor's rejected wife and their rustic offspring. Through all the years of my extremely shortsighted complacency, the attitude of Mr. Reys remained to me inscrutable and, I must confess, open to reproach. A marriage is a marriage after all, a concept: once the step has been taken, the husband belongs with his wife as the cup with the saucer. In the face of these virtuous principles, however, I took a great delight in sitting next to him at the table, captivated by his lively stories about hunting and fishing, about all the animals on his farm, which he treated as his friends. With his rugged outdoor look, his bachelor air, Reys, though of the same age as Grashorst, seemed ten years younger; he did not appear out of place even among the organdy-clad very young girls. He was tall, broad-shouldered and tanned, and he had a soft, light laugh, deep in his throat, that gave color to everything he said. He talked for the pleasure of talking, without expecting applause or even an answer. Touching on the different approaches to a subject, he always achieved a personal point of view, suddenly developed a slight detail, which he became aware of while talking, into shining significance. His banter was always serious, his seriousness always jocular; awkward people were afraid of him because he thwarted expectation and nobody knew how to take him.

To me he always spoke like a friend, mostly about or in connection with my affectionate admiration for Conny, which he fully shared. Occasionally he called my attention to a book which he had read during the long winter evenings on his isolated place. He would then summarize in a few short phrases, with a halting gesture, the contents of, sometimes, three heavy volumes, at that time occupying his deepest thoughts. Tolstoi was his favorite author; his love, Anna Karenina. He could talk about

her with a subdued passion, with such cold fire, as if his own blood were at stake. And sometimes, for one fleeting uncontrolled moment I saw his face glaring, his mouth twisted as in hate.

When I sat on the host's other side, as happened frequently in small company, I was often tempted to compare the two men: on the left the pale profile, bent as though in search of something, on the right the dark, eagerly lifted face, the soft, blue-veined hand, crumbling bread between our plates, and the strong hairy fist that protruded from the cuff above the table.

Mr. Grashorst, too, in a more emphatic way and always in search for the unquestionably right word, was an interesting neighbor, and whatever I still remember in my old age of statesmanship and the rights of nations I owe to his dinner talk. His thoughtful manner of speaking was in perfect harmony with his forward-bent figure and the delicate, moistly-pale face above which the forehead, like a white shell, was prolonged to the fair fringe of hair marking a half-circle around the skull. A pair of glasses with ground lenses seemed to cut his eyes in two, and a fluffy little beard, in which his white hands used to play at moments of high tension, lengthened the lower part of his face. Accustomed to making himself understood in public with a naturally low voice, he often finished off a sentence with an eloquent gesture, as graceful as the gesture of a woman.

When Conny sat opposite us, it seemed to me as if she, too, was driven to comparing, as though the wide differences of character in these two men, which often came to the fore alarmingly in casual conversations, secretly worried her. On those occasions she agreed now with one now with the other, always speaking in a questioning tone, but when the situation became one of threatening danger she chose the side of her husband, while I, without having any convictions except to strike a fair balance, supported the guest whose inner passion foundered on Grashorst's calm and efficient opposition. Laughingly, disregarding my own conscience, I would defend his radical ideas which shook the very foundations of world order. I did this mainly for the satisfaction of revolting against Grashorst who would, under all circumstances, uphold existing society, its principles and general interests. And if we won the battle, Conny, though on the losing side, would look at me tenderly. "Barbarian," she said once to Alting, after one of these pitched battles, while taking him up into the same tender glance, "it's lucky for you that Marie is so emancipated nowadays. . . ." And then, while the four of us had a good laugh at my emancipation, since conservatism was

manifest in my entire appearance, culminating in my stiff hair-do, I saw the fist next to me open and close, as though grinding life and its passions to bits.

Our conversation seldom circled around persons, was mostly concerned with ideas which we connected with imaginary persons and, for the sake of the children, we expressed ourselves in words evading the direct issue. If town gossip gave cause for praise or blame in a more personal sense, Conny was silent immediately, while the blood rushed to her cheeks. Occasionally I seemed to notice that, after such excitement, she would, still blushing down to her neck, defend a guilty person. She never condemned anybody or anything. "If one only knew everything," she would say with a face as if she fathomed life's innermost secrets, "if one always knew everything. . . ." Oh, how I loved in her at such moments that open-mindedness and mildness, that natural eagerness always to believe in the best of everybody and everything, that tentacle-sensitive understanding with which she guessed our warped thoughts—and disproved them before they were uttered. She was undoubtedly a good mother to her children, even if she was not strong enough to make the supreme sacrifice for them.

In the town of my past the days were monotonous and long. The friendship with Conny grew to something like a tradition. Twice a week we took a walk together, on three afternoons she made her appearance in the daisy-setting of my boudoir, and we had tea. Some women can read and knit at the same time. In much the same way Conny could float on her own thoughts and meanwhile carry on a regular conversation. In a sense I was her knitting at that time, and she never let a stitch drop. During a walk she talked little, often not at all, and this experience motivated me to chide women who always had to have something to talk about. This—that we could be silent together—seemed to me one of the noblest elements of our friendship. And yet I remember that it was a relief too when, in this exalted state, we met a good friend, Mr. Reys for instance, a sturdy hiker, or someone else who would accompany us part of the way. And what I liked best of all was to go on charity visits with Conny. On those occasions she was like a child: no system, no regulation was sacred to her. She worked like a goblin, laughed at miscalculations and was fond of "surprises." The sight of a worn-out old woman moved her to tears, the dirtiest-looking children she took to her heart. She knew everyone in the street by name, stopped suddenly to inquire of a John or a Mina, of the family, going

into all possible detail. As a member of the Aid Society, where I had risen to the post of treasurer, it was often my task to curb her generosity. In this connection I learned to appreciate her husband. Though he had little sympathy for her unbridled helpfulness, he never hesitated when it came to providing her with the means to keep family honor intact.

On Sundays Conny told the three of us about her experiences, gave each event a suitable touch of color and, in recapturing the mood of the moment, her face assumed a childlike, pure expression. Her eyes had an inner light, her mouth opened and the red tip of her tongue moved along her eager lips. . . . We three, the two men and I, each in our own way, how much we loved her!

My fortnightly Sunday—thinking back to it now. . . . On the stroke of six-thirty I stood on the steps and with the doorbell I rang in my holiday. The soft huntsman's hat of Mr. Alting Reys, which he wore winter and summer, on weekdays and on Sundays, already hung on its peg, and in the front room I found them, Conny buried in the many sofa cushions, he in the low tapestry chair by the fire. The shaded lamp behind the sofa, the only source of light in the dreamy room, poured its yellow rays over Conny's neck and hands, over her silken hair, the sofa cushions that seemed to be woven of old gold and priceless damask. I was keenly aware, as Conny's arm pulled me onto this throne beside her, of how sadly my black and white checkered blouse shattered this idyll of Thousand-and-One-Nights, but just then the master of the house, returning from his club, would put his key into the door and the meal would be announced. Conny, tall, slim and supple, preceded us through the wide, white-marble hall. In the dining-room, Ewald and Jopje, in velvet suits, were awaiting us, each behind his high-backed chair, with napkins, little bibs, already tied on. The table with four candles in silver candlesticks, the crystal, soap-bubble thin and reflecting the light; every Sunday we found everything like this. We sat far apart, the chilly, pressed napkins slid along our laps, the fragrance of the linen mingled with the spicy odors of the soup. The memory of a scent has magical powers. . . .

In the evening we sat once more in the drawing-room in front, where now the center light was also lit and the furnishings assumed a simpler appearance. The men read the papers or talked; Conny and I busied ourselves with needlework. And not one glance ever disclosed. . . .

Once I went with Conny across the river. "Come with me, Marie," she said, "they are such a jolly family." I hesitated:

wouldn't Mr. Alting mind the visit of a stranger? But she said that he knew all about it and would be glad if I came. On a fresh autumn day, the waves of the river topped with white crests, we sailed across and found the mayor at the landing place, waving his little hat. He drove us in his carriage through the old village to his place, a more or less tumbledown estate on which, in former times, a castle had stood. After a number of ravages, one of the side wings had later been rebuilt into a residence; it was close to the cow shed and gleaming with ivy up to the rafters. There were still luxuriant woodlands around, and one part, behind the meadows, was called "the mayor's forest." At first I hardly realized that the peasant children, who were playing around the house, among dogs, chickens and rabits, also belonged to the mayor; that the chubby woman who rushed to the scene at the call of "Mother!", wiping her hands, was Mrs. Alting Reys. And inside the house, where handsome old pieces stood amid trash, I sat down next to Conny, who had cheerfully taken the youngest girl, Brechtje, from the carriage outside and was now cuddling her on her lap; I was surprised and slightly indignant. How could a man of good breeding do this to himself! He seemed to take it calmly and good-naturedly; and how almost astonishingly he achieved the right tone towards his awkward wife who called him "Fawther," with a deep "a", as if this were the first title to which her husband had rights. He showed us the peacocks and the angry turkey, the large aviary and the aquarium, and he offered each of us a late red rose which I, because I saw Conny do the same, pinned, somewhat defiantly, on my navy-blue bosom. He also showed us his own quiet room, almost a room of state, with a high wall of books, antlers and trophies. And later, after Mrs. Alting had offered us some lemon-peel brandy and I had yielded to the temptation, he went back to his room with Conny to show her some negatives of photographs of a mare, taken for a show.

He walked us down to the ferry landing. During the long walk, with his left arm in Conny's and his right arm in mine, he tried to adjust his steps to our uneven efforts. He was known in the entire vicinity as the eccentric mayor of M., but from the way the villagers greeted him one could clearly see how popular he was, eccentricity notwithstanding.

As we returned on the ferry, with a stiff breeze whipping our hair into our faces—we stayed close to the funnel to keep warm—I talked incessantly of the problems of love and marriage. That man with that woman!

"She is very good to him," Conny said simply, "very good!"

"Well, perhaps . . . but for heaven's sake. . . ."

"What is wrong with it? . . . All men don't desire the same thing in a wife."

"But can you believe that a man like"—and I yielded to my impulse to throw all the male virtues and attractions of Alting into the balance, and I can still see her smile at this unexpected tribute—"can you believe that such a man can love a woman like her? . . ."

"Love is an enigma, you know," she concluded sagely, with her most charming aplomb, which now contained a note of mysteriousness. . . . And she drew the white veil, which made her appear ethereal and transparent as down, tighter around her chin.

She stood against the blue sky, bold and laughing in the breeze, with her hands like protecting shells closed over the rose on her bosom. And finally, by telling an anecdote about Pieter, the oldest, who so strikingly resembled his mother, she succeeded in breaking my stubborn rebelliousness, which she felt still present although I had stopped talking. After that visit, however, I went over to the side of Grashorst and relegated Mrs. Alting Reys to oblivion.

And so the days of several apparently uneventful years slipped through our fingers; it often seemed to me that I lived from one alternate Sunday to the other. I was happy, for all those small joys, elevated to blissfulness, returned faithfully time after time. Until one Sunday the little felt hat with the grey partridge feather was not in its place and when I entered the drawing room, where Conny sat as always among the cushions on the sofa, I learned that my cavalier, as I liked to call him, was ill.

"Seriously?"

Without concern in her voice she said:

"Yes, pleurisy."

I talked at length, with the compassion peculiar to women who distribute their love over the whole world; I recalled seeing him a few days before, when he was attending the horse fair in town, asked whether we could do anything and predicted that he, such a strong and tough man, would surely recover. She winced, as if suddenly her self-control had left her, and nodded shortly, "Of course."

At the dinner table that day we sat farther apart, but the

conversation, which was kept up by the hostess, was as lively as ever.

On the following morning I hardly dared ask for further news about the patient, because Conny steadfastly evaded the subject, until she suddenly said, of her own accord, "We phoned. He had a quiet night." And so well-trained was my friendship that it was contented with this strange reticence, that not even a thought rose on account of its silent depth. . . .

Because of the reassuring news and because I had not lost my heart to Alting, who, in a sense, was my rival and moreover a man who had chosen his maid for a wife, the incident was of only secondary interest to me.

The next day was Ewald's birthday, and the long promised girl-and-boy party took place in the attic room. For this noble purpose I was to turn the fruits of my many piano lessons into the "Myosotis" and the "Polka with Variations," which I knew by heart. Because of a delay in the purchase of a birthday present I was a little late—which hardly ever happened. I met Grashorst, who had temporarily taken my place, on the stairway and heard from him that the reports from M. were less encouraging again and that the fever had diminished only slightly toward morning.

Upstairs I found Conny surrounded by a crowd of young boys. It was a point of pride with all of Ewald's little friends to have danced with his mother. Because I had kept them waiting, I was received with an ovation that was slightly embarrassing, and a swarm of cotton-gloved hands applauded me to the hired piano in the corner of the room. Now the ball could really begin.

While Conny, bent down behind a hedge of curious people, helped Ewald to unwrap the dog whip and whistle that I had finally been able to buy for him, I planted my foot on the pedal, spread out my hands that could span more than an octave . . . then Ewald blew his whistle with a shrill tone. . . . And as though this were a signal, my fingers descended forcefully; in a trice the light colors whirled past my eyes and the rhythmless shuffling began, skipping against the stately cadence of my one polka.

When I got up courage, after the third Myosotis, to turn around while playing, I saw Conny in her old white frock, selected by the birthday-child for the occasion, saw her dancing, dancing like a young girl, in the flickering glow of candles and the flowery light of a genuine Chinese lantern. Straight through the crowd she led her little cavaliers, a clumsy boy, a hopping little girl; restlessly, to all four winds she set her course. . . . She

missed not one dance—everyone got a turn. And when they bumped into each other, there were loud cheers, she herself laughed. . . . I see her before me now. . . . The white dress made her look pale and, above the leaning shoulder of one after the other perspiring lad, her eyes stared dark and wide. . . .

In the intermission, Jop distributed gilt party favors. Mine contained a cap with ribbons, and Conny's a soldier's hat. And later, in a whirl of confetti, we had a snowball fight.

At the end of this glorious evening, when I relieved the tired mother of the task of putting little Jop to bed, Ewald came dancing from the adjoining room in his night clothes, to thank me, too, for my part in the "most wonderful birthday he had ever had."

"How did you like the hats, Aunt Marie?"

"Very nice."

"Mummy always thinks of something funny, something new and different."

"Yes, that Mummy of yours. . . ."

"Only it was too bad that Uncle Hans wasn't there."

Two days after the party she stood unexpectedly, before ten o'clock in the morning, in my room. I felt embarrassed because the slip covers at this inhospitable hour still covered up my little gilt chairs, and now Conny had to see them. I was thinking of a place to hide my dustcloth and so did not pay too much attention to her appearance in the beginning.

She was sitting in the window-seat, with her back to the light, in her wide fur coat, unbuttoning it at first and then again closing it up to her neck. It annoyed me that there was no fire in my little hearth, and I was wondering whether I could, unnoticed, strike a match to the wood shavings. . . . Then I heard her say:

"At the hospital there was not a single nurse available; now Grashorst has phoned to Utrecht. At any rate I am going there. On the ten-thirty ferry. Somebody has to . . . a woman like Maaike hasn't a notion. . . ."

It was the first and the only time I heard Conny's voice burst out in contempt, and I have never forgotten the tone of voice in which she said, "A woman like Maaike. . . ."

"So you are going, . . ." I said hesitantly.

"For a time . . . until help arrives. Hans is very ill." Otherwise she had always called him either Alting or Reys.

"Doctor Smit, who called up this morning, said that it was critical. And when a doctor says critical. . . ." Her hands tightened around her coat collar, pulled it up high.

I nodded, in worried sympathy: "And now you would like me to. . . ?"

She took hold of herself then: "Yes, if you'd do me that favor."

"Of course."

"When Grashorst and the boys come home at noon, it would be so lonesome for them to find nobody. And then the meals. . . . If I may make a suggestion, Marie, come . . . to live with us . . . for a little while. . . . Tonight I may . . . it will all depend . . . that nurse from Utrecht. . . . You see, it would give me greater peace of mind. . . ."

I was only too glad to accept this trusted position!

At ten-thirty I saw her off to the ferry boat. She was calm and, in contrast with her dismay of a little earlier, became finally almost gay, as if by her setting foot on the gangplank all was going to change for the good. She kept me on my toes with little hints about her well-organized household. Each child required special care, the chambermaid had to be reminded . . . and her zealous, "Grashorst is used to this, Grashorst likes it this way," assaulted my flawless illusions about the married state. While the gangplank was pulled in, she called to me from the deck, smiling encouragingly:

"Oh, Marie, I just thought of something. . . . Next week we are going to have the dinner for the bank commissioners at our house. Myntje, the cook, is coming tomorrow morning to talk the menu over. Will you arrange with her. . . ?"

"But, Conny dear. . . !" For attractive culinary arrangements I was certainly the last one to choose! My consternation amused her tremendously.

"You'll be all right," she called out as the boat in taking off drew a long green line through the drab water. "Do a good job, now! Just pick out what you like best!"

Standing in the icy wind among the ferry people at the quay, I followed her with my eyes, thinking, How kind she is! Whoever is in trouble, wherever help is needed, Conny knows no hesitation. All egotism gives way to the dictates of her heart. And I waved to her once more, enthusiastically, when, in the mist-veiled distance, her hand like a little white flag motioned to me from her huge muff.

At noon I made sandwiches for Ewald and Jopje and felt

alternately indispensable and superfluous in the large living-room that was dark in the daytime. I had taken Conny's seat and handled the Meissen coffee service as adroitly as possible. Grashorst was quiet and uncommunicative and extremely formal. I had the impression that, with Conny's parting, all bonds had been disrupted. We exchanged a few words about the patient; he told me the outcome of the telegram sent to the Utrecht hospital and fell in with my admiration for Conny's generous and efficient action.

After dinner he asked me to accompany him and the boys to fetch the Utrecht nurse from the train; the four of us rode in a big cab to the station. On the trip from the station to the ferry I sat in back with the nurse, while he and the boys occupied the front seat. Grashorst and I, who were little informed, more or less evaded the questions the nurse asked us concerning her prospective patient and his family.

"You will find my wife there," I can still hear Grashorst saying, and this was the only definite information he gave her in his own emphatic way. The subject of her return, which I had still thought possible that same evening, he did not touch upon at all. At the ferry he carried the nurse's basket across the gangway, with great care, as if it contained eggs, and he parted with a bow and best wishes for the Alting family.

On the return home, we walked. And after the boys had been put to bed, I poured tea for both of us in the front room where the evening papers were in their usual place. At about ten o'clock Grashorst asked me to play a game of cards with him as he did every evening with his wife. On this first day it struck me how true to his habits this man was, and he gave me the impression that, in his daily grind and in the light relaxation he allowed himself in the evening, he hardly noticed the absence of his wife. To me, who missed her intensely, his easy resignation was so annoying that I constantly tried to bring her name into the conversation, whether appropriately or not, as if to keep the memory of a dead loved one alive.

In order to follow her wishes completely, I stayed overnight in the room next to the children's. She had obviously herself prepared it for me that morning. Nothing was missing; a little vase with three magnificent roses was on the dressing table. And early the next morning I was on hand personally to get Jopje dressed, boil Grashorst's egg—not too soft and not too hard—and to get Ewald, well-fed and properly equipped, off to school. After that, the problem-laden conference with Myntje, the cook, took place.

In the afternoon, Dr. Smit called the house to tell us that the condition of the patient remained critical. The nurse had proved satisfactory. The sick man required much care; Mrs. Grashorst sent word that she could not be dispensed with at the moment. A note from Conny, scribbled in pencil, in which she asked me to take her place a few days longer, followed in the last mail.

No approval or disapproval on Grashorst's part; no hesitation, of course, as far as I was concerned. I wrote Conny a long, enthusiastic and reassuring letter, in which I idealized the whole situation, with her doing a work of charity over there, myself replacing her here as well as I knew how, Grashorst agreeable, the boys delightful.

To be truthful, the days in the large house, from which the light seemed to have vanished together with Conny, were long and weighed heavily on me. The feeling that I made myself useful, the inspiration of little duties from which many of us women draw their vital strength, kept my spirits up, but Grashorst's painstaking courtesy, as if he, too, had only duties to perform toward me, depressed me in spite of myself. The children, too well trained to complain, showed in their eyes a longing for their mother all day long and one night, as I tucked Jopje into his blankets, he said—just as if he, too, had been wondering about the emptiness in our friendly relationship and meant to comfort me in his own way—"Why is it, Aunt Marie? Now you know how much I love you, and still I'm so lonesome for my Mummy every night?"

I cannot say that this confession gave me as much comfort as Jopje had perhaps a right to expect. Nevertheless, on that evening, being "lucky at play" and inspired by the great powers that bind and divide, for better and for worse, I played a profitable game of cards.

The news from M. was scarce. Every day I wrote Conny of how well the household was run under my supervision; the boys received postcards with pictures of the "Municipal Building," the "Ferry Landing," the "Sun" inn, with "Love from Mother" written underneath. And every evening I said, only to provoke a protest from Grashorst: "It's good that Conny stays there quietly. We get along all right here, and over there she is worth a million right now."

But he answered readily in the same spirit, thoughtful and contented: "I think you are right. Constance had a lot of experience with sick people when she was younger; she is clever and she has a steady head."

Is it possible that he never, never suspected anything? A hundred times I have asked myself that question, now, afterwards, looking back. . . . I believe not. He, as well as I, as so many others . . . has lived in perfect balance with his life.

In the days of which I speak, however, I was occupied with other problems. They were indeed more or less my initiation into the wedded state, the bound unity, the inviolable companionship. . . . Like a puzzle I studied that card-playing forehead. How could this man, whose finely cut and certainly aristocratic face reminded me more of a fish every day, how could he have had charm in his younger years for Conny; Conny, who could have married any man she wanted. . . . And upon love I meditated, with fervor and indiscretion.

I stayed at the house for five days that seemed five weeks. On the sixth day a telegram arrived, which I opened while Grashorst was absent: "Alting passed away during the night. Coming home tonight, Constance." I telephoned the bank and told Grashorst, and I perceived in the distant voice a little of the dismay that made my knees give way under me. Grashorst said: "I had just wanted to go there this afternoon. . . . Yes . . . now . . . maybe I will . . . is there anything in the telegram about the funeral?"

"No."

"Oh, I see . . . I suppose . . . let me see . . . Thursday. Then . . . now it's all over. . . . I had better wait." At lunch that noon his mood was somewhat livelier. He told about some of his recollections of Reys, who had always been peculiar, a hot-head, from the time they studied together at Leyden University. At that stupid mistake of his marriage—what did he have to marry that girl for!—he was more embittered than ever before. And it seemed as if he still blamed the marriage for their estrangement.

"No," he repeated, "I could never forgive him for that!"

"You?"

"None of his friends could."

"Conny. . . ."

"Well, of course, a woman."

The urge to contradict him tempted me to plead in favor of people who certainly were man enough to take the consequence of their errors, but the maidenly shyness that had always been part of my nature held me back. I vented my feelings by reprimanding Jopje.

The boys, to whom we did not speak about the death of Alting, were boisterously happy at the prospect of their mother's

return. All the goodies saved up during the week were put in readiness for her. And then there was a scene in which the fatherly authority had to exert itself and on the basis of which I had to confess to myself that they were not spoiled children, since neither of the boys was allowed to stay up after dinner until she came home.

My arbitrary promise that Mama would surely kiss them good night in their beds finally calmed Ewald down; Jopje, exhausted, had cried himself to sleep.

And after this skirmish I suddenly felt my task cut off, and the thoughts came back again. Returning to the front room downstairs, I, who according to relatives and friends had no nerves at all, became strangely restless. I made tea and revived the fire. Grashorst was at a conference at the bank and from there would call for Conny at the ferry. I felt as if some of the sorrow of death would come with her from the other side of the river. Yet I had no realization of the full extent of this grief. She had lost a friend and was affected by other people's sorrows. That thought was sufficient for me to anticipate her coming home with that vague anxiety which besets awkward persons in the presence of tragedy. That I should have to miss my "cavalier" at the fortnightly Sundays from now on, that our circle had lost its fourth man—all this had not yet taken shape in my head, which was above all filled with Conny; but at the same time my eyes strayed again and again to the low armchair in which he had always sat before the fire, broad, strong, hale and hearty; and then the knowledge of his death was a new shock to me each time. That man . . . Reys . . . dead . . . one moment it seemed true, the next doubtful again. When I heard the ferry whistle from afar over the water, I pushed the chair against the wall next to the chimney and pulled the sofa in front. And after brief consideration I turned off the center light.

They came back at half-past eight. In the dim light of the standing lamp I could not immediately see how Conny looked. She did not seem to see my hand wanting to take off her fur coat, and my kiss went past her veil. And then she stood still in the middle of the room, with her hat still on her head, as if, running at top speed she had suddenly been stopped. She replied calmly, however, to my agitated questions, posed blindly.

He had died early in the morning.

"Was he conscious?"

"Yes."

"Were you . . . there?"

"Yes."

"Dreadfully unexpected still. . . ."

She shook her head in denial.

"It wasn't? Then you did. . . ? But take your things off first, Conny."

She pulled up her veil and automatically loosened a few buttons of her coat, but in the midst of her motions her arms fell to her sides.

"Did he . . . suffer?"

"Not then any more."

"But the days before?"

She nodded, swallowed audibly.

Grashorst, who had heard the story on the way home, unfolded the newspaper while standing and looked through the pages, holding the paper toward the lamp.

"You stayed with him at night too?"

"Yes, we took turns. Last night I. . . . it was my turn."

"Aren't you tired out?"

She ignored this and other questions I asked in order to get closer to her.

In the stillness of death which still hovered about her, hauntingly, I groped for words, anything at all:

"It must be a great comfort to you . . . that you went right away that morning."

She stared at me from the low chair against the wall. But she drank the hot tea I handed her.

"And for him," I persisted, while guileless tears choked my whispers, "for him it must have been wonderful . . . you . . . a friend of . . . so many years . . . that you were there."

She returned the empty cup without a word. Only when I asked directly, "How does his wife take it?" she answered again.

"Very well," she said, "very well." And slowly she added, on her own accord:

"Maaike slept in the room next door. Then the nurse saw . . . she wanted to call her . . . but just at that moment. . . ."

The eyes which suddenly looked at me were those of someone in the death throes.

"Just at that moment. . . ." She failed to complete the sentence. Her hands reached out in a wild, gripping gesture, and then she folded them in her lap.

It seemed as if all her strength had been spent in that gesture.

In heartbreaking helplessness she remained seated for a little while, motionless, with those hands pressed together as if in

prayer; then she got up, took my arm and said that she would like . . . would rather . . . go to bed.

"I'd do that," her husband agreed. "It's been a shock, naturally. And it is a sad case. The notice is in the paper. She signs herself: On behalf of the family: Mrs. Alting Reys, née Plomp. I'm afraid she is not very well taken care of financially either. Good old Reys was never good in money matters. And with that big family. . . ."

"Good night," Conny said, offering him her cheek.

"Sleep well; Marie will help you, I'm sure. Marie took good care of us while you were away."

Then, in the hall, I noticed how chalk-white, white as the wall, her face was above the dark coat-collar.

While going upstairs I dared not speak a word, until we came to the door of the children's room. . . . There I remembered my promise and, after some hesitation—maybe it would do her good to see the boys—I stopped her.

"No," she countered, "not now."

On the threshold of the bedroom she took my hand and thanked me effusively for my willingness, my help, which had made it possible for her to stay away.

"But, Conny, that was only the normal thing to do."

"Yes," she repeated, and the sacred light that went from her eyes into mine when she looked at me consciously for the first time since she had come home, has warmed me until this very day. "Yes, it was normal. Everything . . . was . . . normal."

During the days that followed this evening, she received no one; nor did she want to see anyone on the day of the funeral. The first time I saw her again was at the dinner of the bank commissioners for which I had planned the delicacies with Myntje. Conny sat between the commissioner-president and the mayor of our town, and she wore a garnet-red satin gown, cut rather low at the neck, the waist trimmed with old, diamond-sprinkled lace. She had powdered her face and, I suspected, put on a touch of rouge. More than ever her face looked like a waxen mask that stands out in my memory. I never saw her lovelier than that evening, at the head of her table, round which the men sat smoking. She and I were the only women, and I saw her from the other end of the table, in the trembling light of the candles, like a flower under water, far off and strange. She was very lively, bending tirelessly towards the hearing device of the grey notary who was rather deaf. With her burning eyes she dominated the serving staff, unnoticed by the guests. I received a glowing tribute

for my successful efforts and she apologized for her evasive attitude during the past few days by saying:

"I was so busy, Marie, and everything went wrong. One of the waiters sent word that he could not come and before I could get another one. . . . The dinner for the bank commissioners is always a point of pride with Grashorst, and nothing should be missing. . . ."

Nothing was missing indeed that night. And when the commissioner-president started his speech to the "highly respected" director of the bank with a toast to Madame, his wife, our charming hostess, *la main invisible* . . . the acknowledging "Constance," with which Grashorst waved his foaming glass towards his wife, was a tribute earned with her life blood.

After the death of Mr. Alting Reys, who was rarely talked about any more, I continued to be the dinner guest on alternating Sundays. On Conny's desk stood his portrait; the grey partridge-feather of his hat was stuck between the picture and the framing glass. It was a youthful portrait and a good likeness, a face one could forgive much, and when I looked at it I felt an undefinable pang of regret, as if we had somehow failed to pay off a debt owed him.

My relationship with Conny gained by her loss; it became an exception when we did not see each other for a whole day, and the hours of coming and going were less rigidly controlled. Her friendship remained my delight, the meaning and the comfort of my existence, in contrast to my difficult and hardly interesting home life. To me as well as to all others, but especially to me, she was the best of all friends. She shared, as no other could, the circumstances of my life; she understood my suppressed loneliness as . . . my wish. The friendship of Constance Grashorst, the beautiful lady, who maintained her former prestige even now with her prematurely white hair, that friendship elevated Marie van Drunen, who was somewhat of an oddity, to the foot of the small-town idol.

Because of Conny I loved that forsaken place, because of her family, the neighborly home; I waited until two years after my father's death before consenting to my mother's nagging insistence to return to her native village in Gelderland, before I on my part made the sacrifice that any love asks of us.

In that village we are living now, in the cheerful little cottage named "Benvenuta," where Conny once came to visit with her husband and children on a summer vacation trip. The condi-

tion I made for consenting to the removal, namely that I spend a vacation at the Grashorsts once every year, I was able to carry out only during the first few years. My mother became too feeble and could not bear strange hands. . . . But last fall, at Conny's omnipotent request, I spent a day with her at her home, and it was then that she told me what even her husband did not yet know, that she was ill. She gave no name to the illness. But in her parting kiss I felt something that had not been there before.

Every week during that long torture-filled winter I wrote to her with greedy zeal; with mounting anxiety I counted the letters from her. . . .

And at last the end came suddenly.

What her body must have suffered was never mentioned in her letters. But Ewald wrote me: "Mother was a wonder, Aunt Marie. She suffered infernal pains, her sweet face was twisted and still she smiled, told Father and us that it was not so bad, it only seemed so; everything was always so different from what it seemed."

And in the local paper I read that she, a friend of the poor, had been buried under a mountain of flowers, mourned by the whole town.

And now I am sitting in our sun porch, next to a little garden of forget-me-nots, opposite my mother, and with my first secret. And that secret is not even my own. And upstairs, in my room with the Louis XVI furniture, where I hid it like a thief, is the box I received a few days ago, a sealed leather case with my name written on it. Blushing as never before in my life, I took the two bundles of letters from it, and in my awkward hands they lay like live things. . . . Between the ribbons that held them together was a note whose contents I was at great pains to understand; a small ring with a blue stone and a grey feather fell out of it.

"Marie, these are the letters from Hans to me and from me to Hans. I could not part with them. It was not friendship between Hans and myself. I don't want to lie to you any longer after my death. And now I want to ask you to burn the letters for me and to forgive me for having misled you so long. I often misused your friendship and maybe it is that which weighs most heavily on me now that I know that I am incurably ill and have begun to take stock of myself. In friendship one can be honest, in love not always.

"The rest . . . ah, Marie, when it so happens. . . . To me it happened so, and I cannot even say that I have regrets and now

repentant. . . . Because the other, the relationship with Hans, that was my whole life. We loved each other beyond all boundaries.

"But, on the other hand, I have given my husband the life that made him happy in his way. I brought up our children with all my devotion and to my best knowledge. Nobody has had to suffer through me. This has always been my fear: that I would give in to the temptation of being myself once more, an honest woman, a mother like other mothers. Confessing seems something so wide and light. A secret is a jail. But now that I am near to death that silence seems not so hard any more. And I am certain now that I shall be able to keep my secret and to leave the memory my husband and my boys deserve. I can at last lay down my head, and I am grateful that the time has come. My dearest Marie, forgive me and, please, I want you to have a good laugh, that frank, guileless laugh, for having been drawn into sin, willy-nilly, through my poor letter. . . ."

When mother rang the bell that evening for tea, I descended the stairs with a less assured step, in fact, with a heavy feeling of sinfulness. And as I sat down opposite her, I found it difficult, for a moment, to look into her eyes. Mother, who had been hard to get along with all her life, but who had always been so correct! And I, straightforward Marie. . . .

"When it so happens, . . ." wrote Conny.

Bending over my game of solitaire, I had to think of it all the time . . . jack, queen, king . . . when it so happens . . . the inexorable.

And in my virginal bed I lay awake that night, an accessory to the crime . . . won, lost, *himmelhoch jauchzend, zum Tode betruebt* . . . on my little finger was the trusty ring from Conny's middle finger, a secret bridal pledge, a pawn of adultery. . . .

Translated by PAULINE BUKOVSKA

PART IV

TWO FLEMISH MASTERS

Karel van de Woestijne

THE WIFE OF CANDAULES

THE WIFE OF CANDAULES, MY BELOVED, MY BELOVED, (THE EVENING is tranquil and you are listless and I am sad and weary); the wife of Candaules, my bitter love, was very beautiful. . . .

Above the high arch of her little feet with toes the color of white-edged peach blossom—and light sandals of red leather, buckled with a red ruby which sparkled upon the arches—were her small tapering ankles, rosy from the blunt, gay little bumps of the bronze rings that encircled them and that sometimes, when she moved her legs, made sounds of heavy metal and caused a pleasant pain by gentle contusion. And like round spools the curved but not muscular calves rose to severely fastened garments that were numerous, thick and remarkably white. For the wife of Candaules understood the art of being demure.

You mustn't laugh; to look demure is the most lovely demonstration of sweet wisdom; and is there not an irrefutable proof? Who doesn't like to find in a painting a fine reproduction of nature, and who, having found it true to life and lovely, still wants to think of canvas and oil? Who does not like to believe that an actor, with the right voice and gestures, is really Agamemnon or Harlequin? The wife of Candaules knew how to conduct herself with great demureness, even though the thick, heavy draperies about her hips and breasts—only the full round throat with the numerous rows of pearls was bare—allowed one to guess at the perfection of a somewhat small figure, which would perhaps have disappointed you, beloved, because the ripeness of its curves that had probably softened them. For, though the wife of Candaules was very beautiful, she had left the years of youth behind her, which one could guess from her broad, flat arms but not from her charming hands which, without a jewel, were ornamented only by dainty, shining nails. Her eyes—under a low, wide brow that curved like an amber haze—were black, but a moist black as of gazing gazelles, and it remains a secret how they could look demure. If found in other women, they would have

passionately aroused either melting, glowing love or pity that was painfully real, yet she kept them open, and one was neither shocked nor did one lose one's courtesy; for she continued to seem blamelessly wise and intangible. And even her mouth, with open and provoking lips between straight white cheeks, was red like bleeding flesh, and indeed as if weary from frenzied biting; but that mouth aroused no desire that it bite you, though you looked with pleasure at the beautiful line from one corner to the other, like a bow not very suitable for shooting but beautiful and well-shaped. And her face with the imperious nose of a queen was framed by a low hairdress of heavy, dark tresses. And it was so perfect—even if it had struck you as lacking your unusual freshness, my beloved—that one thought of nothing except merely looking at it.

Now this woman was very much loved by her husband, Candaules, who was king of the Lydians. He was a fiery and loquacious man, friendly by nature. He was dressed in garments of red and purple and profuse golden opulence, which left bare his arms, in which brown muscles bulged and gleamed, while in the whiter crook of the elbows and on the broad wrists swelled green and blue veins. He wore golden bands and chains wherever he could place and attach them, and about his hair, that hung curly and black and shiny behind his fleshy ears down to his shoulders, he wound fluttering, fire-colored ribbons. His high-heeled, perforated shoes showed his bare toes, the large one separated by a leather strap from the others—on which he wore rings of no mean value. He generally did not gird on a sword, for he was not a warrior, but into his embroidered sash stuck a long, springy cane with which he laughingly beat his slaves and indicated the turns to the lance bearers when they marched before him in dignified manner, making many maneuvers with a swinging gait. Weighty ornaments heaved on his wide-breathing chest that made his silken vest creak. His fattening belly did not prevent his step from being young and faster than majestic. Nor was his bearded face majestic, for it was like the evening sun, and when he laughed he showed milky white teeth between thick, parted lips, his blazing eyes glowed darkly and his nose had quivering nostrils. Candaules was a man of exuberant, shouting manliness, who loved his wife very much and said to all who wished to listen: "I have the most beautiful wife! I have the most beautiful wife!"

Although he had moods in which he wanted to beat her out of sheer joy at possessing such a beautiful wife, he was full of

tender, fatherly care for her, and sometimes spoilt her with his excessive care. He made her sleep in the coolest chambers (for in Lydia it was doubtless rather hot) and chose for himself the apartments in the west where the sun burned longest and strongest, which in a man may be considered a fine proof of loving self-sacrifice. And he chose for her a retinue of the most beautiful serving women and yet remained faithful to her, which was surely flattering for her. And though she would never wear the jewels he gave her, he was not angry and had no suspicions; for his love was very great and it continued to burn in his body with a steady warmth, or rather heat. So he frequently visited her in her chambers with ever renewed joy, and he loved her so much that he did not ask whether she loved him. For she was a very beautiful woman—though, for sure, no longer very young. . . .

And outside the palace too, he showed his devotion to her, by proud ostentation. To her were dedicated the numerous festivals of which there was so much talk throughout the kingdom and to attend which people came even from the deserts. Because Candaules, contrary to custom, attached importance to her presence near him so that he could speak to her in whispers, she and her closest retinue of women were conducted to the festivals in closed palanquins, and to the crowd she showed herself in thick white veils for modesty's sake. For in this way (but this she did not admit to herself) she made them more desirous and regretful and eager that she would once come with her face exposed.

And below her the games took place: tigers that writhed under arrows shot from above and roared entertainingly until they dragged themselves to the corner where, with their golden eyes broken, they died; wild boars that, provoked and furious, with all bristles erect and eyes blood-shot, ran straight into multitudinous, severely trained spears—and what laughter when one of the lancers was thrown over by the all too mighty collision with the animal; or leisurely bears that very calmly clawed open human shoulders; or the personified violence of bronze-fisted athletes from Greece—which was also the home of the singers who came full of beautiful tales of struggles; and the sweet-mouthed flute players, who were less esteemed.

And the wife of Candaules did not speak a word at these performances, but her eyes, through the narrow slit in her veils, followed the fighters who were stalwart and beautiful; and then, if she looked down at the king, he thought that she was smiling sweetly at him from behind her thick clothes and was pleased

and touched and very happy. And when the feast came to an end in the evening, she was carried back to the palace in the golden palanquin, while the people shouted, making Candaules proud; and then at night, when the moonlight lay green on the verandas, his shadow slid over the echoing marble floors to speak to her and tell her of his great joy. But often she slept, quietly, nobly, below the double-spouted lamp which smoked slightly. And Candaules looked at her and turned back and thought what a beautiful wife he had. . . .

And did the queen really love Candaules? Really, she loved him; really. Had she not bestowed on him the favor of becoming his spouse? Women love the men they favor; and one sees many taken with very ugly men, for it is a bad woman who does not become attached to the man she has given herself to. Now Candaules' wife gladly and deliberately forgot that he had raised her from a slave who dyed and wove the fleece of sheep to be the ruler of his heart and his numerous tribes, and only remembered that she had given him her youth and her beauty; her attachment to him was thus greater than the memory that he had been good to her. And that was almost love, dominating love, which favored the loved one. But not without a certain boredom, as always in cases of domination.

For, you must know, Candaules was very boisterous. He was like an ever crazy, exultant spring wind in young foliage, beating his vivacity against the cool chastity of her white, thick garments. All his movements were like an attack, almost an affront, against her stateliness, and his laugh sounded to her nearly like a very humiliating box on the ears. He used words like pepper, and all in all she found his insistence unpleasant. His skin shone, his lips were moist. He loved her very much, but not with love like hers. She was a very beautiful woman, was she not? And she also had a sense of modesty, did she not? And I do not think that Candaules possessed that in too great measure. . . . He was a strange man; yes, the liberties that his wife allowed him had not estranged him from her. His love had remained passionate, for he was not a man with calmly reasoning brain, nor with nerves like ours, my beloved, full of inherent weariness. He was a beautiful, virile man and strong, without fine manners, noisy in his love and without sentimental modesty.

This bored her, for she felt too much that her love compared with his had become yielding, a disapproving surrender, without regard for a youth that had grown languorous, heavy and ripe. My beloved, my beloved, it must be sad if one thinks sufficiently

on the subject of love when one of the partners exists merely on endured passion, and the wife of Candaules was no longer very young in body; she had, not in royal but in womanly fashion, in the manner of those who no longer feel desire, woven a garment of modest, self-belying gentility (about which I have now spoken enough), which suited her well but which in hours like this, beloved, is paralyzing and brimful of grief. . . . She loved Candaules, certainly; but there grew in her a secret like a growing and hardening little coral tree, and she dared not believe it at first, but it soon crushed and jabbed through her love. It branched out in her daily thoughts, and it would have shown even in her gestures if women were not so good at keeping their own secrets, although they are lavish with those of others, differing in this from men, who give themselves away. And this growing secret was that the bodily love of her husband with which she did not yet dare to be disgusted, for she forced herself to love him, constantly made her think of another love, of more unity with the spirit, of finer taste—though this taste bordered on the bitter—of better understanding, yes, of modesty, and of fitting manners; no tumult, no more riot of love, but the same enjoyment out of a long open glance, a quiet and almost indifferent word, and even in the kiss something pious and holy—Candaules' wife was no longer very young. . . .

Yes, she still loved the king; but he could never become womanish enough, meltingly affectionate, not sweet-feeling enough—he had even never understood that his wife's moods should have been for him a healthy measure of her attachment—to prevent her love from turning lingeringly into another less simple but more adorned one, which would not long falter or tarry to flame up out of the ashes if she found her target.

She found her target. Its name was Gyges. Not difficult, this find, by the way; it was offered her by Candaules himself, who thus presented himself with a rival, as so often happens. Vigorous upon his muscular, tense and sinewy calves, he was slim, with sloping shoulders and well-shaped arms, and on a broad neck he had the noblest, curly, narrow and fine-colored head, blue eyes and lips like a cherry which were not yet concealed by a beard; his straight nose and his small shell-like ears were still very young, and his voice was low and pleasant. As a child the king's favorite, and the most beautiful boy of his most beautiful pair of slaves, the king had let him practise games, ride trotting horses and handle weapons, made for his hand, while still quite young. Then, grown to a youth, in the years when his laughing

voice broke and became deeper, and terrifying passions began to boil in his brains, he was sent to Greece to learn the noble arts of language and song and become a man of profound scholarship, of great service to the state, as well as popular in society. He went there and knew women, of houses of pleasure and others, and they soon became repulsive to him; for the sweetly smiling wisdom of the Hellenes had influenced him, an immature and moderate Asiatic, in such a way that after a short time the delights of criticism hindered him from noticing the beauty that is in everything. He also learned the sciences, which roused in him a desire for dominance greater than love. He became a man full of rhetoric, who managed all things cleverly and pleasantly and ever to his advantage. He also acquired distinction and the art of veiling his thoughts in elegant words that could be interpreted in different ways. And he returned to Lydia proficient.

He was the object of the king's unreserved admiration, for with his undiminished bodily beauty, which flowed in the lines of his chest and belly under his tight jerkin and rose from narrow knees to massive thighs—and his hands had not become heavy—there shone in his glance and manners and caressing words a refined courtesy; he gave wise counsel and was, at the same time, affectionate. And he wore clothes which, though not splendid, were of a beautiful, characteristic cut; and his sword, not large, was light and mighty. Candaules weighed it in his hand, cut through the air with it, and it increased his admiration for Gyges who became a friend whom he trusted, almost deferentially and as happily as a child, with all his affairs and whom he led to his wife's chambers in order to show her with what excellent and refined people he associated.

Candaules' wife did not please him at all; at least, a certain restraint in his dry and nagging disposition did not permit him more (and that was much) than to find her a beautiful woman, no longer very young. This restraint even hindered him, in truth, from making any compliments. He was one of those people who, having overcome passion, or scornful of all passion, can only flatter with hard and forced arbitrariness, be it in word or in deed. Not yet low enough to be able to lie cynically, but already quite soberly descending the stairway of bitter disillusion, which people call truth because it is very deep, beneath everything that used to be dear to them, so that the little patch of blue sky they still see is too small to be called heaven. That is how things stood with Gyges; but he did not suffer much from it, because he

was still very young. He thought that was how it should be, for the Greeks had taught him their life's raillery, which incidentally had grown in him into a grinning caricature; but not being a Greek, he had not mastered their love of beauty or their forgetfulness of all theory when beauty had awakened their admiration. And the most glorious woman, however provocative, was not able to overcome his calculating intellectualization. Was he of a cool nature? By no means; but passion, so easy to create in a little love affair, the highest point that his conception of life admitted, can be reasoned away. Never fooled except deliberately, he thought he could chat with women and found it amusing with his sweet words to make them fall almost in love, although he himself never made false avowals of love; but it seemed ridiculous to him to fall in love himself; there were too many women in the world for that, and after all he was a beautiful youth. . . . And sometimes, if passion got the upper hand, he was ashamed of himself and laughed at his all too vulgar humanity. For alien culture had made him so that he did not consider himself good unless he was the opposite of his countrymen.

This is how he appeared to the wife of Candaules, who saw him, beautiful, serious of face, deeply educated, with appropriate gestures, and, she imagined (what he was not) full of fine feelings —in all modesty, an image, a beautified image of herself.

And, dearest, she loved him, after some resistance to her reason that told her that she loved the king. And, because Gyges apparently did not at first notice her love—although by this time she wore for him an exposed and very readable expression—she loved him still more; and because Candaules did not notice her new love (she wanted to suffer a little from it: that was part of her nature) she began to hate him, with a hatred that grew smartingly like a cancer, day by day, and which she tried to disregard.

See how this passion that had come into existence grew! . . . When Candaules was her first beloved, how she had quivered at the first caress of her limbs that were muscular and hard in those days, raised her wet eyes gratefully and closed them blissfully, and offered her mouth for his kiss, so light, so light—in an atmosphere of love with mild scents, smothering her warm fresh cheeks. Then she was free and such a happy little queen, who enjoyed everything, the days and the clothes and the new jewels, as if she nibbled at these things like a child, her eyes wide and smiling at finding everything so wonderful. And she loved her husband, her real husband, stormily. Her firm, strongly entwined arms were a crown about his head. She belonged to him; she was grateful to

him because she could belong to him, be his wife, entirely his wife.

Alas, her arms had untwined; they had become soft and broad. . . . To think that even the best of sauces grows cold, beloved! And still Candaules was unchanged, neither cooler nor less in love. She still received new jewels; she was tired of wearing jewels, and . . .

Then she loved Gyges. . . . It was quite different, and she felt some shame when she thought of earlier days. For now her limbs were soft and listless. Her beauty, which was great, was like that of statues which, not newly hewn, get marly and weathered under the pattering rain and blowing wind yet still retain their beautiful lines; and, frightened, she almost wept when she felt that she no longer had firm flesh and that her body was no longer like that of a youth approaching manhood. And she grieved that she no longer loved as happily as at first.

But she was all the defter, she knew, and since she had to conquer, could show more importunity. And though she had to safeguard her demureness—and she did it without hypocrisy, for it had become part of her—her eyes, ogling with modesty, and her dainty hands and gait, which she showed off, and the inflection of her voice, though no longer freshly enticing with exuberant youth that screamed for love, spoke so that it would be noticed, she hoped. Ah, if only it had not been noticed! She was frightened, thrust out of a proud peace that was not unhappy, to descend into the garden of a new love that would not be wholesome, perhaps. . . . Would boredom give birth to fear as its only daughter? And she had never been so conscious that she was no longer young; now she combed her hair herself to see its black, lustreless length; she herself prepared the perfumes of leaves and chose the dishes for meals that would not fatten her. For she now loved with a love that was giving, not receiving, and her pressing concern was that the gift be appreciated and accepted gratefully according to its value.

On this she concentrated all her attention. If she did not ask Candaules directly, she knew how to arrange conversations with him in such a way that he himself talked about Gyges and exuberantly praised his accomplishments: he had remained as skillful in driving horses over the clouds of golden sand on the race courses, as he had become in speaking with a sweet mouth about the philosophy of Epicurus (or was he then not yet born, beloved?); he was young, but his youth did not impair his wisdom; he was beautiful but his beauty was never affected. And he was

such a modest friend; he never answered Candaules' praises of his wife's beauty, except to indicate with modest respect that he shared the king's joy at having such an excellent spouse. All this Candaules told and retold, and when his wife heard it she felt a cold, fearful shudder go through her. And she pitied her husband and was seized by pious horror at the great love she bore unobserved for Gyges. Ah love, so sadly unnoticed, so wretchedly alone and blazing so painfully in her heart that was learning to hate!

So she thought, and sometimes she was quite desperate. But Gyges had seen everything she did with practised gestures where the spontaneity of youth could no longer speak. Her hesitation did not conceal her desire, nor fastening her dress still more tightly that her heart was beating violently under it. And he found it pleasant to be loved so, although he was not flattered: for his vanity exceeded his ambition. He despised all that was transient, of which the earth consisted, and honored only the spirit, exclusively. But it was not unpleasant to him, this passion for him of a woman whose beauty he daily heard praised by her own husband. There even grew in him a concealed, amused sympathy for her, and when she was near him, he no longer looked at her with the first indifference but found it pleasurable to follow her with his eyes. Fortunately he dropped these before she looked round, turning her head slowly, for she could well have imagined. . . . Certainly she grew, if not in his estimation, then in his merciful toleration of her love for him, and the more because, incidentally, Candaules began to appear to Gyges like an old fool, ridiculous in his lewd fat, no match for a woman who, even though a woman, was perhaps worth something better.

Oh—Gyges had no affection for her! But irony teaches one to be patient. And it was with great patience that he allowed this love to grow around him like a wild rose and he derived almost pleasure from the pricking of the little thorns that were in the queen's eye and word every day, to tell him secretly that she was entirely his, entirely his.

For, with his feigned indifference, her daring became more urgent. He received anonymous letters to the effect that a woman was dying for his love; in his chambers he found new garments, which he recognized, having seen the queen embroider them in the long afternoons. And if there was talk of games and festivals, he heard her sigh, and if he praised a steed or a weapon, she turned her head away from him with sadness in her eyes, saying nothing. And she seemed to him very unhappy—and he thought of her with curiosity and astonishment long after he had left her,

and he found Candaules very stupid and very lacking in refinement to make his wife so unhappy. For it was his fault that she could no longer love him.

And so the sprouting eglantine of her love grew about him and gradually strangled him, tied his limbs fast and made his will powerless. He now more seriously analyzed the nature of this love, knowing well that it could not be purely passionate, after the manner of a Candaules, and guessed that she was looking for other enjoyment, of the spirit, in so far as a woman can enjoy spiritually. No, well, no, he did not love her. But ought he to sink to the meanness of love-making when the circumstances, perhaps, demanded of him a manly, strengthening friendship? And the fact that she loved him was no hindrance to him; no, her love did not hinder him, not at all. He suffered it, but now he was already a little flattered by it, like a male nurse who is sometimes bored while tending his patient but is grateful, although he may answer him with annoyance, if the latter speaks to him soft words of appreciation. Thus the love of Candaules' wife was somewhat constrainingly unpleasant if he let it affect him more deeply without mental resistance, but nevertheless it was gratifying, and—annoying? No; he liked it very well, although he considered it below his dignity to let this be seen.

Nevertheless he still approached her only as if he were bashful; he had been by nature loquacious. And, while he had formerly been such a master of words, he now hesitated in all he said, apparently really embarrassed lest his words sound inappropriate. Oh, he still had control of himself; but he was afraid to let one of those short, hasty signs escape of a kindly reaching-out disposition—first estranging and then constraining, and finally for a long time, almost troubling, and yet lingeringly blissful, like the scent of a suddenly smelt bouquet of roses that had not been noticed—those little hints which he had seen had such an effect even on those who could joke about themselves. . . . Besides, this kindly disposition surely did not exist! . . .

But it existed, and Candaules' wife no longer doubted it. While he was hesitant, respectful and wary, she became companionable, sweet and winning. In her certainty she chatted naturally with him, leaving out all that might appear to be love-making. It was a pleasant rest, as after a difficult delivery; the mildness of an evening after a fierce afternoon; something, however, with a very importunate indifference, an innocent sweetness after a fierce fire that has quieted down though is not yet extinguished; the coolness of a wine that may yet become heady.

Then, during his more frequent, though timid, visits, she showed Gyges materials that she had had woven, quite two fathoms wide, and then, negligently against the light, the ivory close transparency of the imperceptible mesh. And then she asked whether Greek styles suited Lydian figures; and whether Greek women were beautiful. And Gyges noticed that she did not look at him, and he remarked that he had never looked closely at Greek women, and then she, aside, asked, "Being a Lydian?" which he answered with somewhat offended pride and yet almost shyly, "Oh no, oh no! . . ."

Or she would have some light pastry baked and, Candaules being present, they would all three taste it along with sweet, cool drinks and then, with a serious face, she would praise the happiness of domesticity with the man one loves and with whose every thought one agrees. And then Candaules would laugh without sound, flattered and very much in love. But Gyges would have understood.

Or, for instance, many slave girls passed through the room carrying a great deal of linen to the spring, and beautiful was the line that started from the heel, up the calf and hip, rising to the stretched breast and gracefully curved arm that bent over the load. And, with a meek voice, the queen asked him whether he found one of them beautiful. And Gyges did not dare to answer that he hated the feminine body, hated it with a real fear, as soon as it no longer resembled that of a beautiful youth with sinewy, hard muscles.

This feeling was very genuine in him; like a beloved clump of nettles, it had a sweet taste and left a burning wound. It had become in him feeling, after having been for a long time thought—strange unnaturalness. His brain had made him a soul out of the dregs of many varying arguments. Uprooted from his natural state, he could only obey the acquired conceptions that had perforce given him a new psychic nature. . . .

And that is how we all are, beloved, if we don't degrade ourselves in order to remain near our origin; for men are still more complicated than you women, O my incomprehensible beloved! . . .

That is how it was with Gyges. And, would you believe it, he began to suffer! His youth was a torch that had burned out everything of thought and breeding that he had not brought from Hellas; and he had been stupidly happy because he could laugh about feminine beauty without urgent desire, and had found it inwardly agreeable. But now—he knew Candaules' wife was in

love with him; he ought to have hated her, she ought to have annoyed him with her pappy-softening beauty (and every day he saw better that she was no longer very young); he felt somehow filthy because she loved him. And yet he was wretched because he could love this woman only in thought and for the sake of thought. And this annoyance and wretchedness were for him, by way of education, a cruel pleasure and the enjoyment of a feeling of pain.

And nevertheless he realized that she was no longer quite alien to his life, no longer like a statue that one looks at closely and with interest and later thinks over but sheds no tears over because of its absence or feels pity for when musing on its sorrowful expression of face and gesture. Although he really did not love her, it became a bitter thought now and then to resist something like her, something to which he was forced and yet disposed . . . he could not say toward what disposed. Yes, Candaules was really churlish and ridiculous, although Gyges had to admit to himself, naggingly and resentfully, that Candaules and his wife belonged to one another: this satyr forest god and the shy, smirking nymph.

In this way their hesitant relationship lingered on and the silences that gaped in their conversations were long: she, with her love on her lips like a red morning flower and her eyes cast down —he saw the cobweb of fine little blue veins over the lids fluttering like dark shadows—stitched, long-suffering and submissive, with long movements and she told in the linen, with colored silken threads, the events of a boar hunt between the outlines of two beautiful little palm trees (but she did not let her love pass her lips); he, Gyges, with dry mouth, anxious, disgusted with himself, crossed his legs under the seat, afraid of his own reply if she should make an avowal. And so the days passed: Candaules was away, having left his wife to be diverted by Gyges—for at last he had noticed her boredom. And who, he thought, would entertain her better than this refined Gyges?

Until, one morning, the event took place that decided. . . .

Prepared or by accident? But who knows on which side the purity of feeling was greater or smaller? Don't women always row to the farthest bank while men, being cautious, think it over and remain more in the middle of the stream? For women, when perpetrating villainy, act without principles, having no compulsion but immediate sensation, without the sequence of testing and contemplating and ripening to well-weighed thought.

So, when he entered to receive the greeting that every day was like a bath of cold water, though not unpleasant—and he was

generally received in orderly daintiness that had been prepared during many hours—Gyges found the queen stretched sobbing on a couch, with her face buried in the cushions, tightly wrapped in night attire and unapproachable in her deep sorrow. Unconsciously he neared her with rapid strides and, tender and anxious, wanted to say, "You are weeping, Madame?" But he recovered himself, said nothing and remained standing at a distance of three long paces. With displeasure he suddenly saw the shocking line of her hips as she sobbed. He was on the point of withdrawing, looking round meanwhile, when she turned her head, her eyes sparkling and burning from hot tears, her dry mouth open, and her cheeks a fiery red. Then he stepped toward her again. A movement of her arms made her wide sleeve fall back to the elbow. He did not like thickening arms. . . . Then she closed her eyes and sighed. . . . On the dull marble pavement he noticed the shadow of a small, trembling leaf. . . . And he had compassion. . . . The day was overcast, one of those days he loved because they did not overwhelm or make him incapable of thinking. He had come easily, in a light mood, through the inner courts. A bird had sung and he thought of sad Philomela, without scorn. . . . Then he had found her crying. . . .

And she sighed: "Oh, Gyges, Gyges!" One of her hands clasped the upper edge of her garment and moved it, leaving a part of her breast exposed, and quietly she began, with a convulsive swelling in her throat: "Oh, that we prepare our own undoing like a condemned man his own winding-sheet! Was I not happy? And what had I done wrong that I was no longer happy? And now—entirely alone, entirely alone."

She was silent and looked sideways at Gyges, who was greatly disturbed. And she said, more dully, with staring eyes: "Candaules was here all night. Perhaps he had drunk light, glowing wines. He was very, very much in love. For him I was like his child, and he did not see that I was restive. Why? Oh! . . . He flattered me, said things that almost made me weep. He called me his beautiful, beautiful wife. And I was as if I had death in my limbs and I could not answer or move. He spoke of you with joy, of you, Gyges. Then I burst out crying. . . . Oh, Gyges, Gyges. . . . He wanted to calm me, he lit all the lamps, wanted to be boisterously happy so that I should be too . . . but. . . . And he went away, very regretfully, Gyges. And now I feel so cold. . . ." And modestly she covered her shoulder again and was silent.

Gyges, feeling limp, did not move; he suddenly saw in his mind's eye a disgusting spectacle of the ageing Candaules draw-

ing toward him the fattening queen who turned away a sulky little mouth, shaking her heaving body like an unruly schoolchild. And then the king, running round, frightened, unable to find fire-flints with which to light the chandeliers. And then, Candaules, going away with great difficulty and yet regretfully . . . And she; she was not so ridiculous as he. . . . And thinking of her Gyges forgot his sudden desire to laugh. He again had pity; and, when she looked at him with eyes full of tears, he half sighed and sat down in painful awkwardness.

He found no words. The situation did not seem so amusing to him as it had in the case of others. Again he half sighed. He moved a little nearer and saw that she had stopped crying. He gave a little cough. Then she started again, very quietly, in a steady voice, first rubbing her eyes and cheek with the back of her hand:

"You know everything; you know everything, Gyges, you understand me so well. And—I know very well that only out of respect. . . ."

And Gyges nodded, seriously, almost sincerely.

"But now—I can't stand it any more. He really hurts me. I used to love him, but now he causes me intense suffering. And his hair is so greasy with perfume. . . . He loves me. He has no other women. And I am ashamed that I must hate him. He does not touch one's wrists without hurting. His kiss burns a stigma on one's brow. . . . Oh Gyges, why do I tell you this, you, who already understand it? But I know: considerateness; he was your friend. . . . He is your friend, you who do not dare to become my friend. . . . But I am unhappy, Gyges and—only because of Candaules? One doesn't leave barrels which contained pure oil empty, or they'll crack and burst. And one who once knew love demands love again. Oh, how I loved him then! But it was so different; I was so young. Forgive me. Only now do I know beautiful deep love, like still pools under dense foliage, and even the moon will not discover. . . ."

Gyges thought: "The woman is like the tubers of the leek plant. They look white but have a pungent taste." But he said nothing.

And she played on with her quiet phrases as with bobbins over a cloth being woven.

"Candaules was beautiful and good. . . . Don't be angry. . . . And I was so young and inexperienced and did not know myself. His love was like a smile for me, and I trusted him. His passion was full of tenderness when he first had me as wife.

He was like a father toward a delicate daughter, proud that she was growing up to be beautiful. He could caress my hand a long time in his like a Cyprian kitten, and I tremble when I think how inexpressibly happy it made me. And I was. . . . But now; yes, Gyges, now? And whose fault? Ah, Gyges! . . ."

She moved closer, ogling. Gyges found her vulgar and remembered that she had been a wool-dyeing slave girl. And then he wondered why she had fallen in love with him.

Again she began to speak: "Gyges, you . . ."

But he, suddenly rising with much courage, said:

"Madame, they are waiting at the stud farm to choose the king's horses." And bowing, he went away, drawn up to his full height with springy step, head up, not turning around. . . . She was at first bewildered; then she shrugged her shoulders. Then bitter tears rose, tasting like gall in her throat. She very nearly wept again. But she called the servant girls and dressed. After that she withdrew to her own rooms and remained alone.

Gyges, having left her, was in thought for a long time. The case no longer seemed so strange to him. But it was as if he were walking in new air, air for him alone; as if a wreath floated round him, or sometimes also on unseen clouds. He now reflected more and more consciously. . . . The day had remained a dull blue, without too much sun or shadow, until toward evening, when the light poured from the sky over the earth like the blazing basalt of which crags are cast, palely glowing in the air and blackish-red like the sheen of a distant burning town.

Then Gyges washed carefully and put on a steel-blue jerkin with gold, which suited him well, and red-leather gauntlet gloves. He left off his sword and chose the newest, narrowest thongs to strap round his calves. The helmet, which he had from a Greek conqueror, shone. He found his face in a silver mirror distinguished, and he stepped, sureness beating in his heart, to the queen's chambers. . . . The light from the high windows lay square and motionless on the surrounding purple marble floor; the darkness was already becoming more impenetrable in the corners and the doorway.

From this darkness stepped the greying paleness of the veiled wife of Candaules. Walking slowly across the long hall, she passed alternately through patches of blazing light and enveloping obscurity. Gyges saw the strange spectacle, and, my beloved, since he was contemplative that evening, he thought: "O, Woman, you are approaching, like the soul of your whole sex, which passes by our male life sometimes as clear as the intensest truth and

sometimes as black as the most unfathomable secret." And he was content with himself, but he was not without some restlessness when she, coming very near him, smiled full of sweet reproach and pining forgiveness.

He stood very straight, with his helmet on his left arm. He did not consider it necessary to bow low. His hair waved in a rosy halo of light from the sun behind him. The queen found him beautiful.

He began: "Madame. . . ."

But she motioned him to sit down. She herself lay down on the couch of that morning.

Then he spoke long-considered words, in the best style:

"Madame, I fear I have not misunderstood you. I believe I have noticed that you showed me confidence in expressing a judgment disadvantageous to your husband and his love, increasing it by a surrender which flatters me, but which I do not wish to analyze more deeply, for I am afraid of you, Madame."

She smiled as if saying, "I know better." Her lips curled, showing her teeth. His rhetoric tried to unroll further periods:

"I do not analyze it, Madame, for I am also anxious about my own conceptions. Incidentally, I know you too well not to know how much we think alike about the human feeling that, forgive me, is called love. You have learnt to abominate it through practice, and I, through thinking about it. We are both young, Madame"—he bowed while she closed her eyes—"and how can I help fearing rash and over-hasty, let us say, confidence? For all certainty is relative, although I am convinced I need not fear my own weakness. And yet,—Madame, we must be cautious, not only for our own sakes. One must not be ruthless, although it is good to replace timidity by scepticism. So we must not let Candaules, honored be his name, become suspicious, not out of fear of chastisement for wrong-doing or thinking, but because we stand above a love affair, Madame. You have come to stand above it through experience, have you not, Madame? And I, through upbringing. At most a fine friendship, perhaps? But, even supposing our youth to be armed," he bowed, and she again closed her eyes, "is it not more deceptive even than love which, though despicable beyond measure, stands on the firm ground of animality. But this ground, Madame! Don't let us talk about it! Oh, love! Friendship!" And he felt the blood rush to his cheeks. "Madame, I beg you to believe that I am very flattered and shall remain your loyal servant, a support in all that may overtake you, a protection against anyone who may

disturb you; believe in the devotion of one who no longer believes in duty, the most spiritual of virtues, but who, born of slaves, puts his pride into being a slave who is better than his master."

And at these last words he did not bow. He realized that he had not told half of what he had prepared and he reflected that there must have been gaps in his speech.

Three times she rolled her black-tressed head from side to side upon the cushions. And after that, half wrathful, in her distressing boredom, she sighed:

"If only the king were dead."

He shuddered. It was already quite dark—eastern darkness. The white of her eyes shone like very distant lamps encased in alabaster. . . .

Then, Gyges, again at ease, after a pause in which he had realized the disappeaarnce of the evening light and had been almost amused by his agitation:

"Does not Madame perhaps wish much more than a little change?"

But now her words sounded dull and deep in the obscurity that was steadily growing denser:

"I have been thinking of that for a long time. His death, the wish for it, is perhaps the only thing that lets me strive for you. If it is mutual. How do I know? But—" and she gave three hollow sobs. "I have had enough of it." And then: "You would be a beautiful king, Gyges, and a real one, and not that man of alms, stick beating and other whims."

She was silent, and so was Gyges. It lasted a long time. Then he stood up. She saw his tall figure rise against the light of a window square. She said:

"Now, farewell. Don't think about the fact that I shall have much grief tonight."

He did not answer, first hesitated, then went, very erect and noiseless, out of the room. . . .

In the inner court he saw Candaules, surrounded by bronze and green, and a sharp, short-skirted flute player, who was showing him—bending over it attentively—how one stops up the holes of a flute in turn to make melody. The king spoke to him generously, looking up, and Gyges guessed at the candid face:

"May the night bring you the dreams I wish myself, O Gyges!"

He answered with a counter solicitude, in a subdued voice. And —he thought then of the frightful murder it would be, with blood on his hands, upon an evening like this. Candaules' open

mouth would be black, the fingernails in the torn flesh of the palms, his glowing beard pointing toward heaven, as he lay. . . .

Then Gyges passed with even tread to his room and to sleep. He still heard three flute tones and Candaules' boisterous laugh. And, after undressing carefully, he went to bed.

But he did not sleep. He reflected, though he fought against the thought, that he would be an acceptable king. And Candaules' wife was not too bad. Had he perhaps not drivelled this evening, contrary to his opinion? And then, improvements were very necessary: agriculture. . . . Candaules was a good man, but to learn to play the flute at his age. . . . Drama was little known in Lydia; it would be good to introduce it, to educate the people. And there was especially the army. . . .

For three days he did not see the queen. He remained in his apartments and was surly with his slaves—he had three. The first was tall and stalwart and after all the women and had glittering eyes. He was tractable and cheerful, and Gyges liked him because of his great beauty and feared him somewhat. The two others were shrunken creatures whom he despised and found to be like warts.

On the fourth day the queen sent a message that he was to come to her. Then he was truly afraid, and he went. She had a searching smile to receive him and said, after his bow:

"Three nights Candaules has been here, as far as this bedroom. But could I still receive him, Gyges? So, each time he turned away. You know where his rooms are? In the right wing, yes, in the right wing. . . . They are murmuring in the palace; at the moment he is going about very much with a young flute-player, who will certainly be his favorite. And he remains faithful to me, for every night he comes. . . . You see, Gyges, I have no secrets from you, but seriously, I can't stand him any more. Must I still. . . ."

Gyges felt a great, sad boredom. Surely he did not love this woman?

And then, she continued, languishing: "Can he understand me? Oh, if he would only once make a long journey. You would be the master, Gyges. It's astonishing that I can't easily imagine you as king. . . . But you cannot fancy how I detest him! . . ."

Gyges said nothing. And then it was suddenly as if hot water boiled up in her, and she said, passionately:

"But are you stupid after all? Speak, speak! After all, you wish the same!"

And she approached him with her bare arms, their scent being

wafted toward him. No veiled fire was in her eyes; her lips were wet. Turning pale, he held her away from him; with his open hand he felt the heaving of her breast. He said, with reproach and with little more:

"Madame, Madame!"

She burst into sobs, sank down into the cushions. Again a laugh bubbled up in him, which he quickly smothered; it was really rather boring! Then he made as if, even hesitatingly, to go away. But he returned and with infinite pity (yes, he thought out of pity for the woman who needed his help), with a sudden trembling and noiseless quivering of his voice, which was at the same time calming:

"Is it tonight that you want him to be. . . ." He felt as if sinking into a pit. She did not answer but her sobs stopped. Silence. She did not look at him. And he went away—like a murderer in a melodrama, beloved. What good manners can achieve!

That was at noon. He did not know how it was possible for him to eat with appetite a leg of mutton served by the beautiful man who was his slave and was called simply "Aner." This Aner told Gyges, during the meal, that the king had asked whether he would go riding with him that afternoon. Gyges answered coolly and without alarm in his voice: "I shall go."

Then he and Candaules rode high, white steeds, through the radiant day that gradually grew red with the saffron evening; and beside them leapt like drawn bows the whippets that panted with tongues out and flanks quivering. So the night approached, but this did not silence Candaules. His voice echoed while he said:

"Gyges, I have the most beautiful wife. But what a caprice, that for days now I may not visit her? She is depressed, Gyges; you must cure her, Gyges."

And he kept coming back to this until it riled Gyges, who no longer dared to answer, for there would certainly have arisen a quarrel of sharp words.

Fortunately, they arrived at the palace; and Gyges had never known a colder evening than this. The air made one shiver. His hands, which he constantly rubbed, became clammy. He thought: "What shall I do now?" His good short sword, which he did not look at, hung on the wall. Its strap was of red leather, richly embroidered, and fell in a heavy coil with reflections of white light upon the curve and with a play of golden points.

He still heard the king's clear voice giving orders to the grooms, after that the king's steps toward the drinking halls while hum-

ming. His voice approached like a swarm of quivering gnats and then again became more remote. Gyges thought with annoyance: "He is drinking sultry wines; and tonight. . . ." Then he wanted not to think any more and immediately sat down, dull and benumbed, without emotion. The night came damply through the open window onto his shoulders. Then in his mind's eye he saw again Candaules' wife in the form and shape of the dancer that had become an almost burdensome mental obsession of his, the dancer that twisted round the belly of all Greek vases—the knee of one leg poised on tiptoe, bent, and the head, under a heavy load of hair, turning sideways, and the double flute slanting. Gyges said to himself determinedly: "Surely not for that woman!"

Then it was already very late. The cold was like unseen shadows in the room. His mind suddenly became sharp and cold and as clear as ice. His teeth chattered. As he rose briskly and automatically, the bench fell over, and this made him break out into a sweat of fear. He gripped his sword; the handle was icy. . . .

Then he hastened over the inner courts, dazed and yet very sure of his action, toward the light that shone from Candaules' bedroom. . . . His left hand steadied the sword in his right. He entered by the ever open door and a pleasant scent met him. The king lay snoring on his stomach. He did not see the face that was resting on the bent arm. Then Gyges' heart beat like a sledgehammer, but he chose carefully and well the place where he had to strike: on the left, the third rib, downwards. Then he thought, yes, then he thought that it was incomprehensibly strange that he. . . . And as in a sudden whirling intoxication the sword struck not far from the best place. . . . And Candaules neither cried out nor sighed. But he was dead. . . .

Gyges was now calm, and he left, not looking round, naturally. And on the way he thought over how he was to tell her. "Immediately," he reflected. But then arose a certain boredom on account of an undeniably bad deed. . . . Oh, he detested the woman, really, in a way. She was getting old, she was stout; and tearfulness. . . .

He walked through the dark row of rooms that became lighter and lighter the nearer he came to the queen's. And the air became more full of perfume. There was still one door curtain; should he raise it? He heard hushed voices. . . . Then there was in him such sadness. . . .

He ventured in, and . . . there she stood, naked; she was awaiting him with outstretched arms and sharp, red mouth. All the lights were on, they shone on her white body. One slave girl was

washing her, with scented water, hands gliding over the thick limbs. All she still wore, round the pink, bruised ankles were her irremovable, bronze slave rings. . . . And she smiled and turned her bosom and was about to speak.

But Gyges uttered a cry, and shouted, crazily:

"But you are naked!"

And he fled, into the night that was still and full of stars.

You are weeping, my beloved? Oh, don't cry, although the evening is now tranquil and you so listless and I so painfully weary. . . . Be comforted, my beloved, be comforted.

For, when Gyges had reigned three months, having been named king, and had not visited the queen a single time she had him murdered by the beautiful Aner, his valiant slave, who became the very virile husband of Candaules' wife.

Her name is mentioned neither by Plato nor by Herodotus. Have I told you that her name was Gune?

You are weeping, my beloved?

Translated by Jo MAYO

Willem Elsschot

THE LITTLE BOY

DEAREST WILLIAM,

I am writing today because I want you to know that your twentieth birthday has not passed by your father unnoticed. Shall I congratulate you? Otherwise there is little that is cheering when the year-clock strikes. As regards the everlasting tie—this time too I could find nothing better—it will be handed to you by your mother personally, and certainly not without comment. But let me tell you in advance that I am almost not to blame and assure you that my conduct is pretty innocent. What one calls in grain, "fair average." The best cannot be expected of me, can it? Your mother will leave on Monday to go and see on the spot whether the six months in Paris that you now have behind you have left you untouched as to body and soul, and whether you are being looked after by her excellent sister as she believes a boy like you should be looked after. You are thus warned and still have time

to wash your feet and go to the barber. And every time there is talk of your father, try to exert a soothing influence.

And now to the point. For you must know, William, that your mother will not come alone but that your three-year-old nephew will accompany her on the journey. And Jan, to mention him by name, has undergone an evolution since your departure, I can assure you. I don't mean so much appearance and size, for in half a year that changes little and he has still his curls, you may be sure; I mean the bewilderingly quick development of his thinking faculties and of his oratorical talent. You know that six months ago he still had pleasure in senseless questions, as intermittent as the jug-jug of a nightingale. Well, that time is over and will not return at present, unfortunately. For not only is his interrogation full of pitfalls, but he goes on till I take to flight, and escape is impossible when there is no one at home, for I dare not leave him alone. Now please don't laugh, for I can assure you that you haven't the faintest notion of what awaits you while your mother and aunt do the Paris shops, and you will be thus occasionally sitting alone with the little absurdity.

But dry theory does not convince, and so I cannot do better than send you a true report of a conversation that I had with the young man this afternoon, while your dear mother went to town to try on a dress. It began when the street door closed behind her, and if she had not returned two hours later, probably driven by hunger, I should not have been able to finish this report today.

As always he went straight at it without any consideration for my activities. For the bang of our gate had not died away when he threw his spade into the grass, wiped something away from under his nose, looked at me as if to say, "Now we are ready," and played his first card. He did not actually wink, but there was something like it in his look.

"Is the lion as big as the world?"

If I have to go through with it, I like his lion best, for I myself am not sufficiently sophisticated to have lost all awe of this terror of the desert. So let's go right ahead with that beast. I make short work of it:

"No," I declare as decidedly as if I had really weighed it against the King of the Desert. And with a sigh I close my book.

I have said "no" because it is true and short and because he likes conclusive replies. He can't bear evasion. According to his fundamental law something has to be large or small, strong or weak, hot or cold, heavy or light, for he finds that shades of difference complicate his world unnecessarily. He sees to it that the

large dominates, the strong oppresses, the hot burns and the heavy crushes, and the small, weak, cold and light are there merely to make all this enduring. And he himself is the hub round which everything turns.

But however conclusive my "no" was, he looks sour, and it takes some time until I realize that this glorious truth is not to his taste. This time it is really too true, and so I spontaneously correct myself:

"Yes, Jan, the lion *is* as large as the world."

I have used his name confidentially with a slight tremolo, in the hope of getting him into a gracious mood, and this time I give him a mouthful all at once by not simply saying "yes," for after my "no" it would have sounded a little silly. And, above all, he is not to think that I am simply blurting out something, otherwise he will lump me together with the charwoman who gives no answer at all and goes on mopping the floor. I therefore add to that "yes" his whole original question with lion and all, and in a rather exaggerated tone of affirmation, so that he at least gets the impression that this second completely contrary answer is the result of deeper reflection and at the same time prevents him from insisting on confirmation. Lose no time. The less he has to repeat, the sooner he will get to the end of his rosary.

My bumptious sureness apparently does not yet give entire satisfaction.

"Larger?"

He seems to know very well that two things are never equally large and that therefore in this case also one of the two is probably a little larger. I even suppose that his conviction about the relation of lion to world was already fixed before he asked whether one is as large as the other. His first question was simply an introductory allegro. He only acted as if he were in doubt so as not to influence me in the choice of my answer. For an opinion dictated by him, as it were, can never give him as much pleasure as the free expression of my opinion, at least if this does not conflict with his peculiar management of his no less peculiar creation. In any case I know that I may not hesitate now between the positive, well-tried lion and the abstract world, otherwise things will immediately go wrong. After all, his question has something of a summons in it. I hear him thinking: "Just dare, with your nerve, to find that lion only a little smaller!" And to be devoured myself, well, no thank you! For he understands that one can without difficulty give someone who is so easily brought from "no" to "yes" a second kick in the behind.

"Yes, larger," I admit reluctantly.

He enjoys his victory and that of his lion for a moment, so that I already take up my book.

"If Jan puts a lion with the Germans, what then?"

What have they not done with that poor Germany since the Treaty of Versailles! And now, after all those vultures, this lion, too. I should answer that the Germans would put his lion in a cage at Hagenbeck's, but I dare not. That beast's prestige lames me completely.

"Then it's bad, Jan," I assure him with a troubled face.

He finds that "bad" much too vague and altogether inadequate.

"What do the Germans say then?"

"Nothing, Jan. They run away."

Did he think he'd make a fool of me? As if he would ever permit those Germans simply to react with words upon the sudden appearance of his lion! Then they might just as well remain sitting and go on drinking. No, whether I like it or not, I must at least make those people take to their heels, however warlike they otherwise are, or I shall certainly get into hot water with His Majesty. For this "say" of the Germans is only the introduction to a far more difficult ordeal that he has in store for them, but he doesn't let loose at once because he wants first to put me through my paces. One hundred per cent lion-minded, or he will place me on the retired list.

His resentful glance searches the distance. It will not please him if the Germans transform their fate with the help of their legs.

"Why do they run away?"

Without committing himself to anything, he wants to hear it definitely declared that all that running is not just for fun but has a deeper cause. And this must not be sought outside the teeth and claws of that beast. Indeed, I feel tamed and entirely reduced to nothing.

"Because they are afraid," I admit meekly.

He puckers his growing eyebrows slightly, very probably because my discharge is progressing too slowly for him.

"Why are they afraid?"

And almost whispering, as if to give me courage:

"Does the lion eat up the Germans?"

He wants to hear wailing, he wants to see blood, or his lion will be stabled for the rest of his days. But Jan must learn geography later and should know that the global munching of all

Germans is too difficult even for a lion, at least at one meal. I shall risk it, for it is for his good.

"Eat them up? Yes, Jan, a few."

"What's that?"

I have fired it recklessly and now he wants to hear then and there what that suspicious "few" means which according to him does not fit in, and to investigate if it is not a beast or something else that could injure his lion, so that he can, if necessary, immediately intervene.

"What?" I ask back in order to win time, for I really don't know how to pump the conception "few" into him. But he is not in the least served with this counter question.

"You must say it."

I put on a meditative, deeply wrinkled face, like a real Archimedes, and now it turns out unexpectedly that my mimicry in itself gives him satisfaction. Have I something of the grimness of a lion, or does he know in advance that not much is to be expected from my search? At least he does not press the point and just lets me sit with that "few," tongue-tied. The main thing, he probably finds, is that his lion fancies Germans and has started eating them up. And, after having followed the first phase of the devouring:

"And if the lion fights with a horse, who wins?"

"The lion," I declare scornfully, for I find that is a question not worth the asking.

"And the horse?"

He wants the wretched end of that horse to seal for the umpteenth time the victory of his lion.

"And the horse?" he repeats imperatively.

"That loses!"

Yes, I should have foreseen it. He knows better than I that the horse is in for it, but he expected machine-gun fire from my mouth, a torrent of rattling verbs under which that horse would be destroyed then and there. And then a disapproving grimace. For "losing" he finds dull, because he who simply loses can win next time, and that thought alone is nothing less than lèse-majesté. Besides, in the depth of his soul, he has determined that his horse shall have no chance to relapse into crime, at least not today.

"Does not the lion eat up the horse?"

It threatens to become a repetition of what has happened to our Germanic brothers, and that "not" means that I could have said it long ago of my own accord. And again the irritated tone.

"But Jan, he can't any more, because he has all those Germans in him." For I find that an early comprehension of logic will not hurt him, and indeed he seems to realize that there is something in it, without however giving up even for a moment the axiom of the ultimate devouring.

"Does the lion eat the horse up when it is dark?" When the Germans are digested, he means.

The auto-da-fé is postponed for a bit but it will be performed. He just gives his lion a little respite, for it is now only four o'clock and still bright day.

It seems to me that his indulgence deserves a reward. So I shall restore his lion to honor and make a radical end to that boring horse.

"Yes, when it is dark the lion catches hold of the horse, shakes it well, tears it to pieces, eats it up and licks the floor clean."

"Only the tail he leaves," I say further, to soften the gory scene a little, for I fear that pedagogically it is not as it should be. After all, *something* may remain of that poor horse.

He thinks about our tail; it seems to run counter to his wishes; apparently he doesn't at all see why that appendage should remain behind on the clean-licked floor for an indefinite time like an annoying posthumous. Perhaps he finds that the curtain cannot fall on this horse-and-lion scene as long as that tail still lies there. And behind his curtain there are still numerous matadors, stamping.

"Why doesn't the lion eat up the tail?"

Before possibly clearing away this remnant himself, he wants to know whether there is not some acceptable excuse for the incomplete dispatch of our late horse, for he likes to see his lion perfect in all his doings and omissions, especially doings. How much prestige has that animal lost, that is the question.

"Because the hairs would tickle his throat."

As motive it is rather poor, but I can find nothing better for the moment. And I see that he finds it an inferior way of doing things on the part of his lion, an inexplicable shortcoming, a professional neglect of duty, for he decides to straighten out this unsolved question of the tail later in the day, suddenly puts away tail and lion and, by way of distraction, lets some of his steam monsters line up.

"And if the engine of the train fights with the steam-roller?"

Occasionally such a lumbering monster comes jolting over the cobblestones of our street. It spits fire and makes the walls shake violently, I must admit. And yet I don't understand how he

comes to let it suddenly enter the lists against his engine, which is his first heavy-weight champion. Does the thing seem larger to him in our narrow street than it really is, or has that ponderous steam-roller built up its prestige out of pure noisiness? So, if those two fight, he doesn't even ask any more, "Who wins then?" as if he considers that I have had enough practice to be able to guess that part of his question.

"Then the train engine wins," I declare airily. For I wouldn't think of giving that beast of a steam-roller a chance in the first round.

Unfortunately he is not pleased. Yes, his steam-roller is something new again and will have to serve for a time. And I quickly realize that this heroic challenger is being treated by me with too much unceremoniousness. That the roller doesn't explicitly win may not displease my friend, but someone who is especially called by him to join issue with that overwhelming engine in any case deserves consideration as being of a good family. Suddenly I get a brain-wave to bury this ungracious treatment with marks of honor, then and there. And, as always, I exaggerate.

"No, Jan, then the steam-roller wins." After all, why not, if he prefers it?

But his face remains surly. The sudden turning of my coat looks most suspicious to him, and besides he considers it presumption that I permit myself, of my own accord, to pronounce such an unexpected knockout of his engine. It looks as if he is getting enough of my self-opinionated judgments, which are too much subject to ebb and tide. What should I do now? That encounter cannot pass without consequences, can it, I think? Then sport gives me an idea. Why not a draw or dead-heat? But then at once, or he will find me ridiculous.

"The engine of the train comes from there and the steam-roller from over there. Closer and closer. Be careful, for they bump against each other! Rattle-bang! And they both stop!"

He follows the spectacle of these two monsters attentively, looks at me sharply as if he weren't sure that I really mean it, is not dissatisfied and again decides, in God's name, to postpone the investigation of the true procedure until this evening, for suddenly he stables engine and steam-roller with tail and lion and throws a searching glance at the lanky silhouette of his great-grandfather who is making his entrance. He has been for a walk and dropped in to see whether we are all alive still. At the sight of his great-grandson he gets tears in his eyes and jovially holds out his carpenter's hand, a hand to frighten one.

Before this coal shovel Jan makes a few steps backward, for he is not generous with handshakes, looks at his older adversary for a moment and finds he is after all worth a question. In any case he digs his steam-roller up for him again.

"And if Great-grandfather is crushed by the steam-roller?"

Great heavens! The man is hardly in the house and he is in for it already. And he laughs and cries too much. If he hasn't any more to say to us, he had better send out a crackling curse now and again, or something else that can make an impression, for that little monster always sticks handkerchiefs in his hand, even before the tears are really there.

"When Great-grandfather is crushed by the steam-roller, he is dead," I declare bitterly.

"And what do people say then?"

"They say that it is a pity."

"And what does the man of the steam-roller say then?"

Thus he does not count that man among the common crowd and finds that he has the right to make his opinion known separately. And in any case he wants to know how the culprit himself will react to the crushing.

"He says: 'By George! There's someone under my machine again!' "

Now pay attention, William. He will reach his aim by a roundabout way, in two stages.

"*What* does the man say?"

This first question not only has the purpose of hearing me say again "By George," which particularly pleases him and which he has definitely adopted, but at the same time to make me repeat the word "machine," which I do, for how could I assume that I am being led by the nose by something that is hardly higher than our table? So I repeat good-naturedly:

"He says: 'By G-G-George! Someone under my machine again!' "

And, because it gives him pleasure, I let the "By George" roll in with an extra hiss this time.

He receives the hissing unblushingly as one who finds it is his due. And now that I have so foolishly confirmed that "machine," and even in the presence of his grandfather, who just smiles:

"Why does he say 'his' machine?"

"Well, Jan, because he rides on it." For in my innocence I think he wants me to demonstrate the possessive pronoun, furnish evidence of ownership for that man on the machine.

"But it is no machine."

"Then what is it, Jan?" For a lion is in any case still less so,

and I don't like to see that someone who is nearly four still makes no distinction between his living and his mechanical champions.

He again looks like gall because he does not at all adjudge me the right to interrogate *him,* as if he were conscious that the glorious time of asking belongs irrevocably to the past for me.

"No," he repeats obstinately, "it is no machine."

I'll agree with him, though the violation of the truth goes against the grain with me too.

"Of course it is no machine." "Obviously" the surviving Germans should say, but they keep quiet. From the fact that my admission is not followed by an elucidation of what it *is,* he concludes that I don't know, for I always spontaneously furnish the maximum.

"What is it then? Don't you know?"

No, confound it, I don't know. And I look into Father's eyes to see if he happens to know, but there I only meet tears. Tears of happiness because Jan asks like that, because I give answers so well and because God allows him to live to see it all.

"It is a steam-roller," says Jan softly, as if he was ashamed for me because the old man is present. And he takes my handkerchief out of my pocket for staunching Great-grandfather's tears in time.

Yes, it is a steam-roller right enough and no machine. If they were all machines, how should we be able to arbitrate without getting into confusion? Indeed, I should have thought of it long ago, that there is only one machine, namely the mighty, shrieking, hurrying machine of the train, the glorious locomotive.

Fortunately he does not let me sit too long in sackcloth and ashes.

"You must say what Jan says when he sees that."

"When he sees what, boy?" For I have entirely lost my bearings and feel as sore as if I had lain under the steam-roller for hours.

"When he sees that the steam-roller has crushed Great-grandfather."

Now that good man will hear his own funeral oration, and who knows whether Jan won't add a few of his new "By George's"?

I shall just think it over, for if he talks about his family I must be doubly careful, pay some regard to ceremony and wrong no one. And I really don't know what he prefers: lamenting at the sad loss or rejoicing at the thoroughness of the crushing. But to the latter I shall not lend myself, for Father's prestige is poor enough. Father himself, who has least to say although it is the

question of his hide, has started filling a pipe. He patiently lets things pass him by in the certainty that gin will soon have the last word.

I must present Jan with something valiant—something like a charge of the blue hussars.

"When he sees that the steam-roller has crushed Great-grandfather, Jan says nothing but gets angry. He lets his eyes roll, stops the steam-roller with one hand, with the other drags the fellow from the machine, no, from the steam-roller, squashes him flat, and whirls him over the Eiffel Tower into the Seine. Voilà!" For I am trying to make him gradually acquainted with Paris by occasionally referring to the Eiffel Tower, the Seine, catacombs, your aunt and other curiosities. He already knows that the Seine is fluid, just like the Schelde.

"What are you saying?" Of course it is the strange "voilà" that he finds suspicious.

"Nothing, Jan."

He looks at me sharply as if to say: "Take care!"

"When Jan whirls that man into the Seine, doesn't he drown?"

I believe he is beginning to grow anxious about the fate of the man, not so much on account of the drowning itself, for his victims are legion, but because he doesn't want to see the steam-roller immobilized forever. And it can't move without that fellow. Yes, the man must be helped.

"When he is nearly drowned and comes up for the last time, Jan fishes him out of the water by his hair, makes him promise never to do it again, gives him a kick, puts him back on his steam-roller, blows his trumpet and lets him drive on."

If he doesn't oppose that driving on, the steam-roller is out of the way; we can still have a great deal on hand. But about that trumpet I should have remained silent, for I believe he has one lying about somewhere.

"And Great-grandfather?" he asks hesitantly.

Good boy. As long as Great-grandfather lay invisible under the steam-roller he could stand it. But now that this roller has withdrawn, he doesn't dare to look at the remains. Is it something that still has shape, or simply a spot, a skin, in one word, a second annoying horse-tail, the clearing away of which can again cause a lot of bother? And now that that fellow has been allowed to keep his fated life, he seems to feel inclined to place our crushed father on his feet again. But I'll have to take care with such an operation, and the best thing is probably to consult

first. I look concerned. And in a lisp, so that our hard-of-hearing victim cannot understand:

"Shall we cure Great-grandfather, Jan? Then he can have a drink."

Jan hesitates but hasn't the courage to go on sitting near that corpse any longer. He flees from the terrible truth to accept a role in the comedy of this resurrection.

"Uncle Karel?" he suggests in a whisper.

Unforgivable that I did not myself immediately think of that doctor of a brother of mine. Good for you, Jan. And in rapture I take hold of Father's hands, who feels that I want to congratulate him on something or other, for he squeezes back energetically, and I see new tears.

Meanwhile Jan has caught sight of a box the lid of which is ornamented with butterflies.

"What's that?"

"Butterflies."

"Are they also animals?"

"Yes, Jan."

"Are those animals in the zoo?"

"Certainly, Jan."

"Were those animals bitten to death by the lions and tigers long ago?"

"Yes, boy, don't worry."

"What are you saying?"

Again he finds that that "worry" is too much. Those animals are bitten to death, or they are not, and that's all.

"May the lions and tigers cack and piss in the zoo?"

I find this transition astonishing and ask myself anxiously why he suddenly leads his noble lions onto the stage in such a grotesque act. Surely no innate obscenity? And the theory of heredity haunts my mind, for I have a whole lot behind me in all sorts of spheres. And from what has leaked out, my forebears were no better. In any case his vocabulary must be purified. But I resolutely say "yes," for truth before all.

"Who lets them cack and piss?"

"The bosses, Jan."

Slightly deaf and puffing, Father stands looking, waiting for the drink. He has just sauntered as far as our sideboard, but has returned without doing anything, for he wants to receive but not to take.

"Why may Jan not cack and piss in the garden?"

Thank goodness it has nothing to do with obscenity, but with

our good neighbor's wife. For he himself has scandalously abused our garden till the lynx eye of Mrs. Peeters, though hindered by a curtain, discovered that it was no pumpkin. And then she immediately took her pen in hand.

"Why?" he insists.

"Because Jan is no lion." For I hate the classic "Because!"

"And if Jan is a lion after all?"

"Then Jan must eat horses up every day, and the tails will tickle his throat." For I don't want to talk about that smutty story any more, especially now that we have started on the good path. Then I'd rather dispatch that tough tail in any possible way.

He seems to feel that I am resolute in contradiction this time, for he again looks attentively at the lid of that box.

"Aren't those sunstrokes?"

"No, Jan."

Now at last I understand why he threw those butterflies to his lions and tigers just now. For when it was very hot, I warned him against the sun and spoke of sunstroke. And a little later he came rushing into the kitchen, moaning: "Sunstroke! Sunstroke!" His mother dropped whatever she was holding and flew to meet him, whereupon he showed her the sunstroke in question, sitting quietly on a white rose.

"Has a sunstroke paws?"

For a sunstroke is, and at present remains, an animal for him, something that has shape, volume, weight and weapons, and can perhaps fight against steam-rollers.

"Will Jan never die?"

Would the bitter fate of Germans, horse and Great-grandfather have brought him to his senses?

"No, boy, never."

I wish it were true.

"And if God fights against a sunstroke?"

I see to my amazement that the Supreme Being is also engaged in his troupe, and ask myself who has let me in for this. Luckily that sunstroke is relatively harmless, for if it must fight against his lion, I am at a loss what to do.

But his feelers have caught something, for he dashes to the street door, opens it, and his mother sails in carrying a neat package, the pink ribbon of which he immediately begins to untie.

"Do lions and tigers eat chocolate too?" I hear him ask.

My ordeal has thus come to an end, and I walk with Father to the bottle of bitters. His hand trembles slightly when we clink

glasses and before he sips he lets his misty eye, which has seen more than he will see again, rest like a blessing on his great-grandson.

Now, dearest William, you have some idea what awaits you. Remember that *he* leads the dance. He, and no other, has proclaimed that that lion is larger than the world, that all Germans will be devoured hide and hair, that a little later there is still room for a horse, that its tail does not receive pardon but stay of execution, that Father is reduced to a fig and then blown up again like a balloon, that a steam-roller is a steam-roller and no machine—that the conductor does not drown but will continue riding on cobblestones to the Day of Judgment, that a sunstroke has at least paws, and that he himself will live forever, and down here. And you are no more than the irrational mouthpiece through which he now comes to announce his doctrine also in Paris. See therefore that you are booted and spurred, for he will probably begin before he takes his cap off. You are a pretty reasonable boy and I count on your handling his troupe with tact. If you see a chance of increasing it with local celebrities, all the better. And if I may adjure you, see at least that he brings back his collection, as it is at this moment intact. Above all, treat his lion with the greatest circumspection and temporarily give him Frenchmen to eat. Pass over that cacking and pissing as if you didn't understand it: that is probably the best way. But don't leave him quite unguarded meanwhile, for I don't believe that in principle he would shrink from a practical demonstration in Auntie's Louis XV drawing-room if he comes to the conclusion that your narrow-mindedness cannot do without it. And if the little fellow should not unbend immediately upon entering, then ask him casually whether Great-grandfather wasn't recently crushed by a steam-roller and whether he hasn't by any chance left a horse-tail here. Then you will see.

William, William, do your best with him! And now you write once to your loving father.

Translated by Jo MAYO

PART V

THE GENERATION OF 1910

A. Roland Holst

THE DEATH OF CUCHULAINN OF MURHEVNA

I

MANY SAY THAT HE MET HIS DEATH WHILE COMBATTING COUNTLESS enemies and that finally, exhausted and red with the blood of his wounds, he bound himself to a rock so as to die standing up. After his death—it is told—he should have been seen by the high, royal women, standing in a strange and hazy battle wagon, driving past them swift and wild but inaudibly, across the plains of Emain Macha, along the dark walls of the king Concobar Mac Nessa.

This is the great story of his death.

But there is another still which many have never heard. And those who heard it, denied it, though they narrated it themselves. For it sounds like the dark, wild plaint of the ocean against the cliffs and of the wind across the solitary dusk of the hills. In this tale his death is not an act of limitless heroism midst the oncoming enemy, an epic eulogized by the admiration of his men, but a thing of desolate somberness, a madness that came to him through the hostile fear of his king and his comrades-in-arms, And behind this downfall, mercilessly, is the vengeance of a woman who once was loved by him.

Her name was Aoife and she was much dreaded in Scotland where she lived. It had been seen how the greatest warriors recoiled before her power, wavering and falling through the impact of her spears and her sword. Cuchulainn, when a youth, had been sent to Scotland by his king Concobar to be so trained in the handling of arms that he would be invincible. He had gone, and when Aoife and her warriors marched against the people and the king with whom he lived, he had defeated her and carried her in his arms as a prisoner to them for whom he fought. There he laid her down upon the earth and placed the point of his sword between her breasts until she begged for mercy. He gave her back her liberty and she loved him because of his

prowess and magnanimity. And he lived with her in her abode on the wild coast.

But too much of a life with which his youth was as yet unacquainted stood between him and her. His days could not be filled with her. For hours on end he roamed in utter loneliness over the rocks; and when the sun submerged into the western waters and behind him the dark wind of night began to rise, there awoke in him the great longing for his country, for Ireland, and it blew over him like a mighty rain and the rustling of autumns past. And he thought of the beautiful and lovely Emere whom he had left behind. He saw again the sunny pasture in which he had encountered her for the first time, amidst her young girl friends. He had come in his speedy battle wagon, standing high in the colors of his festive cloak, and they had talked together and understood each other in words which remained secret to anyone else who heard them.

But Forgal, her father, was afraid of their love. As an unknown he came to Concobar with costly offerings and, praising the heroic deeds of the youthful Cuchulainn, he had advised the king to send him to Scotland, for the completion of his training as a warrior.

And now, in the desolation of this country and living with the woman Aoife whose dark power loved him because of the light of youth that was slowly extinguishing within herself, he understood that Forgal never hoped to see him back in Ireland. And his desire for the lovely Emere grew in sorrow and loneliness. He stretched out his hands towards the darkening sea, and to the fading light. And above the dashing of the waves his voice could be heard, chanting the songs which once he sang in unison with his brothers-in-arms, in the halls of Concobar, in the evening when the storm roared plaintively across the plateau of Emain Macha. When the night was full he returned to the dark house of Aoife, slowly and with head bowed, and gave way again to the caresses of her who loved him for his strength.

But once—on a bright, quiet morning when he walked along the coast—he saw a ship with sails large and white that slowly came nearer. And soon he heard that from the stern there came the sound of a song. The wind blew the singing voices over the waters and Cuchulainn saw that people were waving at him. A fiery haze of joy and desire surrounded him. And when at last his friends had landed and greeted him with gladness, saying, "Concobar sends us to thee, to bring thee back to Ireland," he stretched out his arms to them but had no words. His eyes

looked out over them and they were filled with light. But one of them took his hands and forced him to listen to the good news they carried. Then he understood. Swiftly he went to Aoife's house where his shield hung and his sword. But at the exit of the great hall Aoife came and stood in front of him. She was pale and asked in a smothered voice,

"Where goest thou, Cuchulainn? Who are these strange men that stand outside and spoke to thee?"

He laid his hand upon her shoulder and pushed her aside. Looking straight before him, he said,

"They come from Ireland. They come for me. I must go. I cannot do differently."

And then, glancing at her, he added, "Do no longer place thyself between me and them."

But she did not desist and spoke—her voice was softer than he had ever heard it.

"Cuchulainn, I carry thy child. It will be a son. Shall he not know his father?"

For some time Cuchulainn was silent and when he looked at her again his eyes were pensive; there was a strange distance in his voice when he asked her slowly, "And wilt thou be the mother of my son?" Staring in front of him he said, as if speaking to himself, "And would he be like me?"

But now Aoife's voice sounded certain and proud.

"He shall be like his father. For my love for thee who conceived him was great, Cuchulainn! He shall be high and mighty, and a danger to his enemies."

Thereupon Cuchulainn took from his finger a golden ring and gave it to Aoife, saying, "Let his name be Conloch. When he is a man and can wear this ring, then tell him to go to Ireland. And let the warriors of Concobar be able to witness that the son of Cuchulainn is strong and without fear!"

Then he passed her and went out into the cool morning air. She saw him approach the strange men who were his friends and who walked towards him with rejoicing. Not once did he look back at her and with his friends he disappeared.

She remained where she stood; she did not move but stared out over the ocean. At last she saw a ship that drifted towards the blue horizon with large, smooth sails. She bowed her proud head and turned around. And shiveringly she went back into her empty, dark abode.

Not long afterwards, in her solitude, the son was born whom

she called Conloch. During those first years he grew up into a strong and handsome lad. The desire for a life of action and rejoicings awakened in him like a morning wind, when his mother taught him the handling of his weapons. But though soon he acquired great dexterity, his mother never allowed him to leave her but for the hunt with some of her most trusted warriors. Conloch loved his mother, but respect and an undefined fear were stronger in his affection than tenderness. Too often did he feel his youthfulness placed in the shadow of her high and dark taciturnity. Yet at times she was wistful and tender and spoke to him of his father Cuchulainn. But she stared into the flames and her words seemed hardly meant for him; for if he asked a question she seemed to be startled, and her answer would be vague and indeterminate.

Once it happened that towards the falling of night he came back from the hunt. Approaching the gate of his home he saw his mother standing there, high and still in the dusk. His coming she did not hear; she was looking out across the ocean. And when he had reached her and, leaning upon his spear, gazed at the far horizon across the waters where the sun had set and the last fires of day were slowly extinguishing, she remained silent.

"Whereof thinkest thou, mother?" Conloch asked.

She answered slowly and said,

"This is the light of the great sun, setting. But oh, the light that shone around the head of Cuchulainn when he became a conqueror! I can bear witness to it—for I saw it when his great prowess defeated me and laid me down upon the earth."

But Conloch said, "I understand thee not, mother. What is this light thou speakest of?"

Then Aoife looked at her son and said,

"When Cuchulainn, in the growing heat of the battle, is gifted with the strength of ecstasy that turns him into victor, his enemy sees a flaming light appear around his head. For though his mother was an earthly woman, his father is the Sun God of the Tuatha ṭhe Danaan. And when this light becomes visible then his enemy knows—'this is Cuchulainn of Murhevna, and I am lost.' "

Aoife was silent and entered her house. Slowly Conloch followed her, thinking of her words and of the father whom he had never known.

Another year went by. Aoife noticed the strength of her son and the dreamy fire in his eyes, and she thought of his promised voyage to Ireland. And still she could not decide. But one day,

when she was alone, a man who had long lived in Ireland and who had only recently returned to Scotland, came to her and he said,

"I have spent long days with Concobar Mac Nessa and his warriors. And I have seen Cuchulainn of Murhevna there, great and revered. He is happy and full of love for the beautiful woman Emere. His great deeds are done in her name; for him there is no one else but she."

After having said this, he left Aoife.

Until the sun had set she walked up and down the great hall of her house. Wide and cold her eyes were opened. Her lips were pale and thin and closed; and the nails of her taut fingers pressed deeply into her breast. She walked up and down, through the stillness between the stone walls—up and down, with long strides. And with every step the certainty became harder and heavier to bear; until suddenly she stood still and she knew and pronounced it through her white, bared teeth: the death of him whom she loved, the death of Cuchulainn of Murhevna.

"He shall die!" she called out through the somber silence of the hall. The sun had set and it was almost night around her. She looked outside and heard a step approaching. "My son," she whispered. And then, in a voice of great decision, she said,

"And it shall be through my son's hand."

She went to the other end of the room and sat down upon her high throne that stood completely in the dark. Conloch entered. He stood still in the center, between the four walls and had not as yet noticed his mother. Then her voice arose from the obscurity and reached him.

"My son, thy time has come. Thou art grown into a mighty warrior; thou art the strongest of these lands. It is my wish that thou goest to Ireland. Tomorrow thou shalt leave."

"Is it to find my father that thou sendest me?" asked Conloch, and there was happiness in his voice. She bent down from the dark that veiled her face:

"I know not where Cuchulainn is."

"Is he no longer with Concobar Mac Nessa?"

Again she bowed and said,

"No."

But she continued immediately,

"Instead thou art to go to Emain Macha where Concobar and his warriors are. And two things thou shalt promise me: to ask no one for Cuchulainn of Murhevna nor to divulge thy

name to whomsoever it be, except when the power of the sword forces thee to do so."

Conloch, foreseeing an arduous journey and mighty deeds in foreign lands, said without hesitation:

"Thou hast my word. I shall leave tomorrow."

The next morning a misty rain blew around Aoife where she stood upon the rocks, high above the seething ocean and looked for the ship upon which she knew her son was sailing farther and farther away. And she thought of a quiet, bright morning long ago. She lifted her voice to the dark winds:

"Through his son he shall die! He forsook my love. Through the child of my love he shall perish!"

And silently, with slow steps, she returned to her house, her head deeply bent against the wind.

II

Many were gathered in the great hall of King Concobar Mac Nessa. The sweet sounds of a harp trickled through the semi-darkness. An old woman played, lost in dreams, of the lovers of her past. High and mighty men they had been but now forgetfulness was whistling over their graves. And through her playing, monotonously, recurred the theme of life's relentless instability.

Concobar sat pensively upon his throne, his heavy head bent. His golden crown shimmered through the dusk.

Cuchulainn of Murhevna was seated near the fire and at his feet was the beautiful Emere. She looked up at his impassive face and thought of the mighty wonder of his life—and how great deeds were to him like the leaves to an oak tree.

Behind them, in the dusk of the high-ceilinged hall, were many warriors with their wives. They all listened to the harp; but suddenly the playing ceased. For a moment the wind alone was heard; then a hasty step. And below the torch over the entrance to the hall there appeared a young warrior. In a loud voice he announced,

"There is a stranger outside. He wishes not to divulge his name—but by the force of the sword. One who was with me fought him but lies defeated. For although this stranger is young, his sword is powerful. Shall I conduct him into the hall?"

Cuchulainn arose and spoke,

"He shall not come here unless his name be known to us. And to me he shall divulge it."

Without glancing back at Emere he passed through the rows of warriors, beneath the torch and outside the gate. There Conloch was waiting near the body of the man whom he had defeated. He leaned upon his sword.

"Tell me thy name, stranger!"

Conloch looked up. A mighty figure was standing before him. Above the dark shield was the head, proud and serious and the naked sword shone brightly. They faced each other in the dying of the day. Behind his opponent Conloch saw how the sun was setting; already the hills were steeped in black.

"Has not my answer been given for the king and for his warriors? My answer is my weapon!"

And Conloch lifted high his sword. The steel caught the last rays of the sun and was transformed into a line of fire. His adversary retreated a few steps, and certain of his conquest he asked with gentle emphasis,

"Is there not in the country whence thou comest a young woman who loveth thee and looketh forward to thy return?"

But Conloch came nearer whilst he cried,

"Thou knowest my answer!"

The fight began. So loud were the clashes upon the bronze shields that warriors and women alike came forth through the gate of Emain Macha. They saw how Cuchulainn was pressed back by the wild attack of his youthful opponent and did not understand why he recoiled. They knew not the vague tenderness which rendered mighty Cuchulainn uncertain of himself. Until, of a sudden, they heard him cry,

"But tell me—who art thou? Thy face is like that of a woman I once knew."

The stranger did not reply. A new attack, more powerful than the previous ones, followed. Emere appeared upon the wall above the gate. The sun had meantime set and the darkness of evening descended rapidly. The clashes on Cuchulainn's shield became heavier and more menacing. Cuchulainn shrank back further and further, to the place in which a large rock stood solitarily upon the plain. There he must make a stand; but it was as if he hesitated.

Speechless with fear Emere stood upon the wall. She watched the unknown warrior approach and a resounding clash followed. The shield of Cuchulainn came slowly down. But then of a sudden, they all saw the sign of his godliness. Around his head a strange light appeared, the flaming light of the Sun God of the Tuatha the Danaan. It burned before the rock like a heavenly

fire. A shout of joy arose from among the group of fighters and women in the dusk. Upon the dark wall Emere stretched out her arms. And they all saw how Cuchulainn's adversary staggered suddenly. A breathless dismay seemed to have overtaken him. His shield was trembling. His sword hung powerlessly from his hand. For Conloch stared into the light and knew that he was facing his father. He wished to cry out, but his voice lay dark and dead within his throat. Now Cuchulainn was held by the force of his divine invincibility. He lifted the spear of Tuatha the Danaan and threw it.

And the many who watched them in the growing dusk saw the young warrior fall and they heard a loud voice crying,

"My father, my father!"

And they saw the head of Cuchulainn bending over the black spot where he had gained his victory and they heard him ask a question to which a dying voice answered. Then the strange light was extinguished and the obscure stillness was torn by the sudden, deep voice of Cuchulainn, crying, "Conloch! Conloch! My son!"

And the many came nearer, a whispering group of anxious people who wished to know. They saw the figure of Cuchulainn kneeling down by the defeated. In his trembling hands he was lifting the pale face and he looked at it with wide-open eyes. And they heard him moan,

"My son—oh my son; how beautiful thou art. And oh, thy strength and thy courage that lie here in the darkness. My son! Conloch! Arise! Stand near thy father! Oh—to go into battle together with thee, and against us all the men of Ireland from ocean to ocean! There would be fear among them all! Oh, thy shield and thy sword now lying in the dark wind, beyond the touch of thy dead hand! Oh, Conloch, my son—but *art* thou dead? I cannot venge myself. Oh, curse upon Aoife who has wanted this to happen. Curse and dark storms upon her head! If a mighty man had done this and he stood here bragging . . . how I would batter him down and break him! But it was *my* arm! It was my spear! And after this tragedy . . . should this land be to me as before? No! No! No!"

And Concobar's warriors saw how Cuchulainn had arisen, swaying the spear of Tuatha the Danaan. And they heard the wild voice of madness calling, "There shall be collapse! Fright and chaos and the thunder of breaking shields! Where are the fighters who dare to live where Conloch lies defeated? Fear and death upon them! Conloch lies upon the dark soil—and should

they stand and look at me from over their shields? Never! Down, down into the dust and the winds of night! Down!"

They looked at one another and took to flight through the evening—and the women went with them, back through the gate and inside the walls. In loud confusion they rushed into the dark hall where Concobar was still seated upon his throne. And all together, in a medley of voices, they called out to him, telling of Cuchulainn's madness and the storm of his wrath that was on its way and menacing them with death and destruction.

But Emere still stood upon the wall, frozen with fear and horror. She saw how Cuchulainn raved in his grief, and she felt that no life would be safe before the black hurricane of this madness. She stood there, cut off from him forever. The power of a woman whom she had never seen, had separated them irrevocably. In her loneliness she knew that the end was near. She saw it coming, swiftly and inescapably.

For when Cuchulainn, crazed with anger and pain, approached the gate through the night, swaying his mighty weapons and threatening with defeat and death, she heard a song—wild, monotonous and somber—that passed through the gates and went outside. Looking down she saw how Cuchulainn stood still and was silent. It seemed that a long-forgotten dream began to come back to him. And when the singing Druids approached him, he turned and went away while through the evening his voice sang a song of plaints, unbridled and yet so wistful and infinite that human hearts perished in it like small ships in an ominous sea.

And he went in the direction of the ocean, followed by the Druids who chanted wildly and monotonously and somberly and drove him before them by the spell of their fatal will.

And now the warriors and the women came out again, to follow at a distance. And Emere heard them say how Concobar, through the magic power of the Druids would force Cuchulainn to recognize his enemy in the dark, relentless sea, and how he intended to destroy him in a battle against the endless darkness of the waves. And so great and strange her loneliness had grown, and so powerless she felt against the tragic storm of this happening that there was no resistance left in her.

But she saw them all, going across the plain in the evening and long afterwards she heard the singing until this, too, died out. And nothing remained but the cold night and the blowing of the wind that came from afar where the ocean was, the roaring of the wind that was like a call from the dark.

For three days Concobar Mac Nessa remained alone, in the large hall. Sometimes one of those who had followed the Druids appeared before his throne and said that Cuchulainn in his madness was fighting against the waves, and that he penetrated ever further into the seething surf, swaying the mighty spear of the Tuatha the Danaan, and that the Druids continued to place their sorcery between him and the rocks along the coast. On the third day the wind increased. Late in the afternoon Concobar sat by the light of a smoking torch and—while the storm howled over the darkening plains—he thought of the sunny years when Cuchulainn was his friend and the mightiest pillar of his power. And great sadness hung a cloud alike around his kingly head.

Then, towards the coming of the evening, a messenger stood before him and said,

"We have witnessed the end of Cuchulainn's battle against the ocean, oh Concobar! We saw him yield and we heard his mighty voice get lost in the sizzling foam. We saw the swaying of his powerful frame before he disappeared in the dark waters. The waves have left the coast and there is nothing now but darkness, and the voices of the storm and the sea."

Later the warriors and the women returned. They stayed with the king and through the long and somber hours they watched with him, silent under the great sadness of their loss.

Of Emere there was no trace.

In the night the wind subsided. Then at last when the day had come, the king went outside. Still and alone he stood in the calm morning light and his mourning was like a timid child before the strange, exalted peace of this life—until in the end he went back through the gate with a steady stride, to the usual deeds of his day.

Translated by JOSEPH W. F. STOPPELMAN

Dirk Coster

APHORISMS

THERE ARE TWO MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF MAN WHICH DETERMINE everything: the moment when for the first time he truly loves, and that other moment when he reads the Gospels and for the

first time understands them in their higher sense. The one moment is often a bridge to the other.

A man in love wishes to be redeemed by the beloved, and at the same time feels a compulsion toward redeeming his beloved from the guilt of the past, from the weakness of the present, and from the menace of the future. Love is the only feeling in which weakness and strength, the need of help and the impulse to save, self-forgetfulness and self-consciousness, can live united.

The first urge of which man becomes conscious in his love is care for the soul of the beloved, and the first longing of which a woman is conscious is for the beautiful deeds of the man.

Man in his love suddenly realizes with calm serenity that he has come to himself. Man comes to himself by going out to another. Here is the simplest and most palpable proof that man can find himself by losing himself.

Man thinks *about* life; life thinks *in* woman.

It is the law of life that man shall give consciousness to woman, and that woman shall give man strength for deeds.

Love discloses to man a world outside himself, and to woman a world within herself.

The highest love of a life is recognizable by its simplicity and by its simple readiness to overcome at all points the claim of the senses.

Love in its first unconscious beginning is the glorious omen of what it can some time become.

As long as love remains unconscious it betrays its origin as part of the All-Love, as beauty and communion with all souls in an undreamed-of heaven. As soon as love becomes conscious it forgets its origin and believes its beginning and end to be love for one single person.

A single, continuous love does not exist in one human life. But there may be many loves for one single person which follow each other in succession.

Love for one person extended over a whole lifetime, which ever becomes new and yet remains itself, is the most beautiful love of all. Above all else, it bears witness to the freedom of the human soul.

Every period of human life has its own love.

Many men learn only after many experiences and many loves to recognize the wonder of their first love.

The higher a love soars, the more does its revelation savor of sameness. But behind this sameness are hidden limitless riches which are quite withheld from the ordinary eye. This is as true for the love of the holy man as for the noblest earthly love.

In the perfect marriage between man and woman, many dangers arising from the masculine and feminine nature are averted by mutual support.

The danger for the woman is the extinction of the higher intuition; the danger for the man is the wandering away of consciousness into barren logic.

Man seeks himself. Woman seeks others. The danger for man is in becoming hardened within himself; the danger for woman is in losing herself in others.

Women have wonderful discernment in attacking the evil in man at its most vulnerable point. They attack man's evil where it is ridiculous. They intuitively feel that many evils are maintained by the illusion of the greatness of the evil.

To make the child the aim of marriage is one of the logical degeneracies of a period that has gone astray through logic. Man was born for happiness, and happiness is the flowering of his personality. Only he who is happy can give birth to a more beautiful future. Only he who lives for the present lives for the future. Only the man and the woman who live for each other live in the best way for the child. They create a realm of happiness which causes the soul of the child to flower more fully than all willed care and love.

They who make the child the one aim of their marriage make the child the symbol of a joyless resignation.

They who concentrate all their attention on the child take from the child's soul that part of freedom and of its own life that it needs for its development.

For two people to renounce their own human future and to place it in a child—which is often not even their own child but the germ of long-forgotten ancestors come to life again—is the superficial altruistic command of the century of the child. Yet this means nothing more nor less than to burden a new life with the curse of two lost lives, for sooner or later this curse will fulfill itself. The child takes his real experiences from life, but his general conception of life, the key by which he unlocks the meaning of these experiences, he derives from the life of the parents. The child who has seen the life of his parents become lost in his own, lives burdened by the presentiment of the uselessness of all lives, sees his own life stretching toward joyless horizons.

Man desires woman, and woman desires a child; that is the familiar definition of marriage, but only of blind, sensual marriage. If love raises marriage above sensuousness, the man will grasp and possess the world in and through the woman and the dearest and most real child of the woman will be the life work born from the inner embrace of both.

The woman of vital force loves the child more than the man. The woman of soul force loves the man more than the child. For to love the man above the child establishes the triumph of the soul in woman, the triumph of free choice over the necessity of nature.

Love that becomes ever purer becomes ever greater. The lower mother love is continually dividing; the higher mother love divides no longer. The woman of a higher nature already loves the child in the man, just as the highest-minded man loves God in humanity. The one is the feeble antecedent of the other.

He whose heart is joined to a living heart, he only has found, for the first time, true union with life. Only from this moment can his understanding vibrate in unison with life, and this vibrating in unison alone brings forth wisdom.

The dual birth which takes place in every true marriage is the birth of two true natures. Viewed in this light, man and woman are each other's creation.

The greater the number of persons a man can love in turn, the greater has been his love for himself in these loves.

The man who loves sensuously worships himself through others.

Where love is not, the innate hostility of the sexes instantly reveals itself.

Man's sensuousness is egotistical because it seeks to express itself at the cost of the woman's personality. But the woman's urge toward motherhood is no less egotistical because it seeks to realize itself at the cost of the man's personality. As long as these impulses remain in their natural state they are a bitter denial of each other's eternal life principle, of each other's individuality.

Without love woman sees in man merely gluttony of the senses, and man sees in woman merely the agent of procreation. Without love woman feels man's nature merely as a blind devouring force, and man feels in woman's nature merely blind resistance, an ambush placed by nature for his lust. From the conflict of these two only blind hate can arise. Therefore every sensuous, instinctive marriage is the beginning of a tragedy, a covert, endless struggle to the death.

Married love does not fade out in comradeship as is the common opinion of the thoughtless. Married love is either extinguished in the bitter hostility of the sexes (concealed behind the cloak of comradeship) or else the joy of the soul which the first glance promised is found again. These are the only possible outcomes.

There is a moment in every love when the imagination of the lover voluntarily pictures the loved one in ugliness and sickness, in order to greet this image with a more triumphant love. Thus the strength of the soul manifests itself and renders powerless by its light the dark accident of the senses.

There is another work of the imagination which is involuntary and which reveals man to himself. Whenever the image of the beloved appears as sick or ugly, in dream or in fantasy, and the man feels his love suddenly paralyzed and dissolved, his love is still clouded by secret lusts.

Woman's judgment is infallible when passion does not mar her vision. Her judgment can become appalling foolishness when passion governs her. Woman's method of judgment is of a higher order than man's, yet at the same time fraught with much more danger for life.

What makes woman's judgment so dangerous for life is the fact that she listens to no doubt, either in wisdom or in folly.

When her soul is at peace, the judgment of the noble woman can be the infallible guide of man's reason.

Man's reason, man's consciousness, should ally itself with woman's wisdom, just as the loving man naturally allies himself with the woman. Governing and directing her, he must feel himself the servant.

The great malady of the modern world is the dominion of the masculine element over the feminine.

A complete natural love is not conceivable without an absolute jealousy. Jealousy is the supreme proof of the genuineness of a natural love but also the scorching mark of its shame. The fact that man in his jealousy at a given moment or under given circumstances is able to create joy out of the bitterest sorrow, out of the bitterest lashing of the one being to whom he otherwise wishes all good—this fact alone is enough to convince one that man should not remain in a state of natural love but must direct himself towards a higher love—no matter how long the road or how beautiful the naturalness of his present love. For what is a love which is already prepared so that tomorrow it may turn into the deadliest hate?

Translated by BEATRICE M. HINKLE

(From Dirk Coster, *The Living and the Lifeless,* copyright 1929, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York)

Just Havelaar

LITTLE THINGS

WE LIE, THE TWELVE OF US, IN THE WHITE WARD WITH ITS EMPTY walls, where nothing arrests the eye. There is not even the shabbiest symptom of that ineradicable urge toward beauty which

has brought so much delight and so much ugliness into the world. Empty and neutral are the walls, and along them the iron beds are ranged, with smooth, white spread at the foot of each.

Hands lie motionless on the bed-clothes; the masks of the faces sleep on, though awake. The eyes stare openly, veiling life. Life here has become a staring.

A dark head across the way moves monotonously from side to side on the white pillow, in a mechanized gesture of pain. I try not to look, but again and again my glance is attracted by it: the head goes incessantly from left to right, from right to left, regularly, like the pendulum of a clock.

At the low table in the middle sits a nurse, busy with our "charts."

It is the quiet hour of the afternoon. But there are no hours here, time here has no significance. Each hour is an eternity between eternities. There are the short interruptions: the noon meal, the cup of tea, the sandwiches, the evening porridge. . . . There is the instant at which both electric lights on the high ceiling begin to shine. There is the instant that these are turned out and the little green light governs the dusky space: the little lamp above the table where the night nurse dreams away her hours. There is the endless night, which is just as little a night as the day has been a day.

Time flows on, indolent, faded as a sewer canal. "Das Leben ist ein schmutziger Strom."

Now it is afternoon, the dead time of the afternoon. We wait. For what? The duties have been attended to. The doctor has gone. We have all received treatment, one after the other. We wait.

We wait for the evening, for the night, as we wait at night for the pale dawn.

Each one waits for the hour when he will be delivered and received again into the great, far world. How many weeks now? How many months?

How, indeed, has this all happened to us, and how shall we ever again adjust ourselves to the world?

Many have gone away, many have come. Nothing has changed.

Each one waits. Each one thinks his little thoughts, always the same. Each has his cares, each his burdens. Each ponders upon his malady, his pain, his own body. Each one has his pocket mirror in which he uneasily scrutinizes his face.

We live here in frightful solitude. There are times, certainly,

when we talk together; there are even moments of gaiety and moments of discussion. Good-nature is possible among us. We feel that we are the room "team." But it is teamwork among ghosts. No one resembles himself any more. We are impersonalized. It is teamwork in a negative world, in a world that waits. Our true self feels completely abandoned.

The differences in position, in class and in education, have flowed away. All has become negative, even this uniformity. Never has anyone been so desperate an individual: at the mercy of his own negation. Never has anyone so consciously concealed himself from his fellow beings, as though he were hiding an unspeakable and shameful secret in his heart.

Each one refuses to live here, to make a life here. Each one clings firmly to that other life, the former life in the world. We did not know each other while we were still living, when we were "I." We only know each other since we have become ghosts. Hence this alarming solitude behind the appearance of comradeship.

Each one is abandoned to himself, to that which still remains of his old self. Each one is ashamed of his disguise.

This is the age-long hour of great melancholy; a melancholy as empty, colorless, endless as we have never known until now; a melancholy that washes over you, in which you are surrendered as a drowned man to the fate of the unfathomable waves. A melancholy that stares at you from the dead eyes of the masks and from the white emptiness of the walls; that buzzes in the vacant space.

In the world, melancholy remains a malady *de luxe* and is mostly an aesthetically decked out boredom. But here it is the misery of hell. Satan's substance must be of melancholy, for the substance of melancholy is negation; the thing common to all of us. One hides it behind his laughter, the other behind his silence. You wrestle with it, in vain. All your energies, all your thoughts and feelings are corroded by it.

When people from the world of living realities come to visit us, they ask us if we aren't bored. No indeed . . . we aren't bored. In order to be bored there must be the possibility of an activity, an unfulfilled possibility. But we are absolutely passive. We lose our way in total apathy. We are tossed about on a gloomy, fatal sea of melancholy. Melancholy is our most deep-seated illness, the shameful sickness of which we do not speak.

Will this sickness ever withdraw from us? When we return

to the great world, shall we ever conquer this sickness? Or will a solitude continue to surround us? Will there be a despair always gnawing at our hearts? Will an estrangement remain between us and those whom we love the most and of whom we think with such hopeless longing the whole day, every moment when we are not thinking of ourselves, of our ills and troubles?

Once we had a certain pride, a certain briskness, even in bitter days. Where has it gone? We still act as though we were brisk, but we know that each day leaves us weaker and more humiliated, each long day, each eternal night.

How still, how enigmatically still. . . . An emptiness rather than a stillness. If only one began to speak again, the nonsense talk of every day, to sing as we sing here, just to make a sound.

I peer through the great empty windows. There is a wall opposite, a wall of the same building in which we are lying. Some dim hall windows break the dullness of the barren prison-like wall. Above the wall, above the gray, ruled-off tile roof I see a long narrow streak of the sky. I stare endlessly at that streak of sky. Sometimes clouds go by; it is a smooth unbroken gray curtain. At night one can sometimes see a star wander across the small space, a frightfully faraway star, solitary and eternal and useless, like everything here.

I stare at the little piece of sky which is now blue, thin blue, luminous and far. This sky radiates over the world in which we lived, acted, moved. People don't notice it; but we know what this sky means.

I stare and think my sluggish thoughts, which take no form. But suddenly my attention is strained, sharp. There, in that small strip of sky, there is something moving, endlessly high and far. A bird? It wheels about and glitters a minute in the sunlight, like silver, and veers in a circle, disappearing diagonally upward: the aeroplane!

An almost unbearable joy has sprung up in my heart, like that of the day when I first saw men soar upward from the earth and drive about in the unending space.

To me this fleeting apparition is like a glorious message from the world. It is as if the world came to deliver me from this forlorn condition. It is as a sign sent out to me by life, to encourage me.

I cannot get over it. I sit up straight. I feel my heart pound as if a miracle had occurred to me.

Fool . . . these trifles! The nurse was right in what she said to me last night while she came clandestinely to console me with a cup of tea. She was right when she said that I could be so excessive, so immoderate in my thankfulness that no one could tell whether I really meant any of it. Such little things must remain only trifles, she said. And her black eyes in the pale, pointed face laughed sorrowfully and mockingly.

But what are trifles? What would life be without them? Perhaps life is nothing more than a succession of trifles.

Whenever I think back, yearning, to my old life, do I think then of great events, of heroic deeds, of rare experiences?

I think then of little things. What makes life lovable is the memory of little things. Deeply and intensely to experience little things—there you have the secret of life. I have never understood it so well as here. What we miss here is the little things which are great experiences. Therefore this life is unbearable. Therefore the profound and powerful books which I have read here have remained trifles. Therefore fine and tender verses become so insignificant here. Therefore everything that once fascinated us now tires us. Everything becomes equally indifferent, now that little things have lost their meaning.

It was not that glistening object which moved me so strangely; it was not the thought that we, earth-creatures, had conquered the heavens, as they say. It was something else. It was the symbol of freedom.

Freedom moves me. Not the romantic freedom which dreams of heroic deeds, not the freedom youth speaks of; but the freedom to live our lives, to be ourselves in the surroundings which we ourselves have created. The freedom of daily duties, the freedom of good work, the freedom of one's own home.

My thoughts go there where my heart is. I see the rooms again, where the light is so beautiful, so beautifully, so gently shining on all the faithful objects. You can sit still there in the chair by the window and look around and follow the easy movements of the exquisite fair child, always busy. You listen to her crystal-clear little voice and to the quiet ticking of the solemn wall clock, and you feel satisfied. You can be there, engrossed in a book, and feel the whole beloved atmosphere, faithful and protecting, around you. Each thing has its own story, everything awakens memories, everything is woven into your memory. Indifference does not exist there.

I see the room, even more quiet and subdued, where I am

alone with my work. The writing table where the chaos of life is in combat with the order of the spirit; the familiar, faithful books along the wall, the portraits of those who have meant the most in my life. It is sober and frugal, noble and austere, but never gloomy.

In this atmosphere I remember how full of significance the little things are. The daily dinner there takes on the consecration of a communion. Tea-time is a rich little ceremony, not to be celebrated thoughtlessly. When, on holidays in winter, the fire flames in the evening on the hearth, we stare fascinated at the little wonder flame, that small violence of the fire which destroys, purifies and awakes to life. The magic of the fire awakens dreams as great as those caused by the sounds of the music to which I so eagerly listen because it frees my soul.

There are the good friendly people into whose eyes you can look during the conversation which need not be interesting in order to have depth. It is good to be silent here with those who give inspiration to this atmosphere and who make things real. When two people who understand each other draw together in the silence, in speechless tenderness, because their depth is the same and the music of their lives is in the same key, then life has been fulfilled. Then dream and reality are no longer distinguishable.

I think of Verster, the painter who died recently, a passionate man who continually withdrew from the turbulence of the world and its opinions into the narrow compass of his old country house and the things that were nearby. A limited existence apart from the world; an endlessly rich life in the chamber of the soul.

Few could manage to live that way without shriveling up, without evaporating in the egoism of self-sufficiency. I do not know whether I may call his the most beautiful life, but I know that his life was justified. For his relation to things became ever more sincere and deep, the little things became ever greater for him, his soul became ever more independent of the world.

Has tenderness ever expressed itself so firmly? Has repose ever been so tense?

The world became as crystal, so transparent. Each thing became a mirror of the soul, and yet remained but a thing.

What is great and what is small? And if the little things are not great for us, how, then, could the great things ever be so? Eternity spans the distinctions between the small and the great.

A tall form suddenly rises up near me.

"I thought you were asleep," laughed the nurse, offering the thermometer with a gesture not lacking in grace. I look at her thoughtfully.

"On the contrary," I say, "I believe I was quite awake."

Jacob Israel de Haan

HAMAME MARRIES

HAMAME, WHICH MEANS LITTLE DOVE, IS ONE OF THE JEMENITIC servants at the boys' orphanage. And she is going to marry. It is time, too, for Hamame is already over twenty. But she has not been lucky in love. This is her second betrothed, a widower. Hamame let the first marriage go by. And that cost her eight pounds sterling, as had been agreed in the engagement terms. No small thing for a Jemenitic servant girl at a boys' orphanage. Afterwards it turned out that Hamame, which means Little Dove, had made a mistake. She did not really love her second betrothed. But let another marriage go by? It will cost her eight pounds again, and everybody will laugh at her. So it is agreed that Hamame will marry the widower.

And now all the difficulties in the path of love! The money that is needed for a black suit and a new fez. For a white bride's dress with a veil of white and silver. For new shoes and for new handkerchiefs. There are now long conferences with Hamame's mother who is a witch. Small, sunburnt and skinny.

And will Hamame's father, Mr. Mozes Azirie, come over from Egypt for this great day? That he ran away from the witch is a matter of course. Hamame has never seen him. Will he come? And above all, will he send a contribution to the expenses of the unforgettable day? And will Reine, the Jemenitic kitchen maid, be invited? Terrible things have happened between Reine and Hamame. Of course neither of them began it. Hamame very much offended Reine. She said: "Reine, you are a thief. And your sister, who lives at Rischon le Zion and washes for the English soldiers in Ludd, your sister is a bad woman." It is a matter of course that Reine then took counter-measures. She went to the synagogue of the Jemenites. She opened the Holy Ark and she solemnly cursed Hamame with the widower and the

two families to the third and fourth generation. It is doubtful if she will be invited now.

We, however, receive a beautiful gold announcement on tissue paper. A branch with birds. The initials of the Little Dove and her widower S and H. Between them in a sweeping curve the proverb: "Voice of happiness and voice of joy! Voice of bridegroom and of bride." Underneath that again a double triangle with "Zion" in it. Then the invitation: "The bridegroom's mother, Mrs. Hamame Jozef Saied, and the bride's father, R. Mozes Azirie and spouse have the honor to invite you to the marriage feast of their children Salomo and Hamame. And those that do us the honor, we shall honor! Church ceremony, so God will, Friday 15 Kislev 5681 at two o'clock European time, punctually in the house of the bride's father in the quarter 'Hut of Peace.'" No wonder we are going!

The festivities begin for the women on Thursday afternoon. We enter the house of the bride's father in the "Hut of Peace" quarter. And we survey the crowd. Reine has not been invited. The witch did not want it. We hear that R. Mozes Azirie has not come. And he has not sent any money either. But a beautiful letter. And so we have to be content with that. The whole room is crammed full of Jemenitic ladies and Jemenitic offspring. Some are already dressed in European style. But most of them in Jemenitic style, in gay colors that clash. They have much gold, well embossed and beaten. For the Jemenites are beautiful goldsmiths. And they sit on the floor, so close to each other that there is hardly room for us. Of course, we get a place of honor, next to Hamame. The bridegroom is not present. That would not be proper. Hamame sits like a doll in white, with veil of white and silver. She may not say a word and she must keep her eyes modestly cast down. It is very difficult, but we trust that after the wedding she will make up for lost time. Next to Hamame sit the bridesmaids equally doll-white, doll-stiff, each with a tall, white candle in her hand. All the ladies smoke. Cigarettes or steadily at a Turkish water-pipe. There is also singing, clapping of hands and some powerful music of kettle-drums and tin cans. And the refreshments! Lavish refreshments! A large washbasin is brought in full of peeled "kersaussies," nuts and almonds. A smaller one with pomegranate pips. Everyone gets a handkerchief full. And then we tuck in. Lucky that this does not cost Hamame any money. For each of the guests pays. Everything is dear here now. Also marriage feasts. The least is now already two shillings. We

have given a pound. But then everybody respects us for it. We are invited to the midday meal: bread, meat and "hilme," a Jemenitic dish of pepper with pepper.

It is a very beautiful feast. Hamame's mother beams. She has on a flowery pink dressing gown with stylish white lace at the neck and sleeves. And she, the woman, fierce and brown. A witch. If she is lucky, there will be some left over. All the furniture has been taken out of the little room. Only a large bedstead has remained. In this a little row of offspring sleeps sweetly and peacefully. Sometimes, when one wakes up—there are nine lying there —a Jemenitic mother gets up and gives her baby the breast. There is a very young and very beautiful little Jemenitic mother to whom belongs a very beautiful little Jemenitic boy. I praise him like this: "What a nice little boy." But she looks at me, frightened and indignant. What a dangerous stupidity to praise a child like that! Do I want the Evil Ear to hear it? The beautiful little Jemenitic mother therefore gives the beautiful little Jemenitic boy a good shaking and she grumbles at him. "This is a dreadful child. Bad and ugly. God has indeed punished me. But what can I do, a poor woman?" The formalities with respect to the Evil Ear are herewith fulfilled. She now cuddles the dear little fellow again. And she puts him down to sleep nicely in the row of little snoozers.

In the evening we go to the men's feast in another little house in the "Hut of Peace" quarter. It is of course very full. And very hot. There is music. And there are psalm-singers with loud voices and dangerous handclapping. There are of course refreshments: salted peas, nuts, almonds, pomegranates. And there is a substantial bottle of sour, slightly fermented wine. And a devilish beverage which they distil themselves from dried raisins. There is also dancing. But not men with women. That would not be proper. The ladies occasionally come peeping round the corner. But even that is new-fashioned. A tall, thin man is dancing. A tall, black youth. Perhaps he is the Devil. But it would not do to ask him. The one who dances with him—but they do not touch one another—is a slim, dark Jemenitic boy of fifteen who is called Jozef and is a shoemaker. But he is also the best dancer in the community. There goes the music and the clapping of hands. The man and the boy go devoutly and carefully. Restrained and taut, they look at each other's feet. At each other's movements. Slowly, little moved at the beginning. But the music becomes wild. The hands of the assembly go faster. The man

and the boy go faster. Breathless. Music, music, music. The hands beating. The boy, the man. Breathless. Finished, finished, finished.

Entire stories are danced in this way by the Jemenites. They dance all through the night.

When the young Jozef has recovered his breath somewhat he naturally receives a present. And I ask what story is depicted in this dance. "Sir," says the youngster Jozef, coloring, "this is a dance to the rebuilding of the Holy Temple." And to think that I have always imagined the rebuilding of the Holy Temple quite differently!

And on Friday afternoon in the little house in the "Hut of Peace" quarter Hamame and her widower acquire each other. This time men and women together. And all the little offspring safe and out of the way again in the big bed. In little rows and heaps. There is again wild music. A Jemenitic boy beats two drums at the same time. One large, dark and somber. And over against that a small, taut one that crows and laughs loudly. They acquire each other amidst a great hubbub. The seven blessings are pronounced, holy one and sensuous one at the same time. Two old men dance the prescribed holy dances in front of the bridal pair. Wondrous twists and turns of the powerless bodies. But exactly as it has to be. Dancing in front of the bridal pair is a holy task with which the oldest and most dignified are honored. The handsome boy Jozef looks on. He dances differently, after all.

In a procession we then bring Hamame and the comforted widower to the conjugal abode. Also in the quarter called "Hut of Peace." Of course with music in front. Then the white bridesmaids with the white candles, the flames flickering in the wind. Then the bridal pair and the guests. According to rank and station. There is the old rabbi who has the seven blessings on his conscience. A purple caftan and a white woven shoulder-shawl. The mild, broken sky. The wind. But no rain yet, although there is already dampness in the air. We walk very slowly and in dignified manner as the music makes us walk. All the people of the "Hut of Peace" come running out. A very little alley and a very little house, into which we dive. I shudder. Tomorrow the slave-life will begin for her. Hamame is married.

Translated by Jo MAYO

M. Nijhoff

PEN ON PAPER

BECAUSE I HAVE SPENT THE SUMMER IN A TENT ON THE BEACH CONtinually squinting in the sun I have dead-white crow's-feet across my brown temples on either side of my eyes. Now, in my room again, when I sometimes cross my legs under the desk they burn lightly at the spots where they touch each other; and even sitting on a chair I feel somewhat too high, for I used to remain hour upon hour, days it seemed, on the sand under the canvas, looking out across the sea through the three-cornered opening of the tent. From that habit my hands have kept a sort of inclination to be clasped over my knees and feel strange here on the writing pad in sudden indetermination, idle, fluttering in endless space, and like an aimless bird my pen begins to describe vague circles from ink to paper and over the paper, back and forth. But my eyes pay no attention to it, no more than to the confused cries and circlings of one lone sea-mew, for still half-closed in protection against the salt wind they stare along the shore to the first houses of the bathing place, turning slowly sidewise with the horizon to the point where the sun stands directly over the sea and a strip of glancing rays makes the water impossible to view, are dazzled for a moment and then turn back with a jerk to look down between my knees at my feet that have burrowed into the warm sand. Yes, I know certainly that I can recall myself to consciousness a hundred times to fix my attention here on what I am writing; it will be in vain; I am estranged; my skin has been too long uncovered; my blood is in all parts too near the surface and I, aware of it, have neither part nor parcel in this body, in this figure, half animal, sitting here at my writing desk as if in a tent. It is this body who writes, who lets my pen flourish and soar with long, undulating strokes, who dreams a monstrous dream on which my consciousness has no hold. Formerly, when my conscious mind wrote with careful strokes up and down, clear and lucid, noting the results of abstract reveries in which I sauntered with my tormented, philosopher face through the suburb where I live—what a trouble it cost me then to give my thoughts something like flesh and blood emotion. Whereas now that the strange, free swing of my self-motivated hand writes

independently, I begin to perceive that it expresses itself in a trim and tight form, the dreaming beast, and that my alert consciousness can do no better than to measure strength against it, wrestle with it and follow these voluntary movements of the pen on paper to get them into control if possible—in so doing have I not become two opposing elements striving against each other, beyond control of reason, possibly in a struggle to the death?

Because, moreover, of late particularly in this lonely spring after innumerable fruitless nights of bitter effort wherein I failed to drive my soul in its intellectual essence up to what I called a "vision of God," I made up my mind to choose the opposite extreme, to hold it down to my body, and decide to write only that which tended toward physical enjoyment such as an adventure or a contest; for now I know, thought I, the rules of this game and feel myself equal to it. I must refuse to work on anything that, begun with emotional impulse, is carried on with talented study and completed with the conscious daring of speculation. I must require that the subject appear to me as such a strong antagonist that it will set me at work and keep me at work so that I do not give way to it—the psychic, therefore, I shall leave to it, I thought, for my own part the only criterion will be the physical enjoyment in writing, a pleasure so intense that in the last analysis all gloomy literature by its incompleteness must contain something of insincerity, ingratitude in the author who merely suppresses this great pleasure while living through his disheartening sentences. This explains why the dejected realism of some ten years past goes paired with so-called objectivity. The author eliminates himself, for otherwise in his pessimistic view of the world he would have made a laughable discord of himself which would, of course, have spoiled his book. And so this objective realism was actually a perverted romanticism, suffocated to keep a mood in tune, a disguised bovaryism and, written as spectator standing outside of the subject, was actually a critical rather than a creative method of work, which does not shut out feeling, on the contrary objectivates and sterilizes it to a mood in which the writer himself froze fast. This, in my opinion, leads only to mind or characters in a story, never to major characters, which differ precisely in that in them the author writes fully and gives them a share in his utmost perceptions, above all in his creative delight, and thus maintains their superiority over the other figures. To bring this into my own domain, the realm of poets, there have always been two kinds of poets: on the one hand the secretaries to themselves, a little by

their own will but not of their own fault, tormented lives, and, on the other hand, the stubborn pioneers of new feelings, themselves the cause of all that happened to them and who, in whatever doubt and weakness, still knew the chief fault to be in themselves. There, on the one hand, is Baudelaire with his matchless clarity and simplicity of expression of the dark wisdom of which he himself was the dupe, without being able to do anything about it, and, on the other, Verlaine, who experienced nothing but what Verlaine wrote, wrote with the left hand or the right, but was ever master and responsible in that world which from top to bottom he himself created. This is all very well, very true and profound, but what am I here but a tool, a seismograph for that which I note down with physical enjoyment while my body does the thinking and my pen scratches great circles over the paper? Shall I join issue with this writer, shall I wrestle with him as did Jacob with the Angel until the break of day? Shall I be able to check his speed with my arms that I fling down in desperation on the paper? Shall I construct a tale to canalize his periods into a higher level? Shall I, in writing, write?

Because, in the third place, it has not bothered me for a long while whether people think me mad, since I know positively that I am not; no, to put it more strongly, since I feel a sort of regret that I am no longer mad enough, not so mad as I was for example some fifteen years ago, when my fancies completely engrossed me, when the reality of their plain force exerted its influence on me here and there with demoniacal threats to rise up above the normal to my heights. To name an instance for you, I remember a certain house in the woods where I chose to ramble in a definite spirit of triumph, but would not willingly have passed at night because of a reed-covered dormer window that stared at me like a wide, somber eye so that I fled screaming or, another time, stood petrified calling God and Saint George to my aid, unconscious with fear of the shadow of a dark dragon which I saw there in that garden lying in wait for me, crouched and prepared to spring—of the shadow, I wrote, for had a flesh and blood dragon sprung at me I should resolutely have defended myself and been killed, believe it or not, with a serene mind; so it was only fear of the shadow; and in later life I became aware of my fear and learned to control it. I was afraid, namely, of all that showed itself ill-defined, imaginary, incorporeal, of everything intangible that haunted my brain, of everything, in short, that had no existence, that announced itself only to disappear without leaving a trace: a footfall and no one walking, an opening

door through which no one entered; but like Saint Thomas I was always set at rest as soon as I could experience some real contact or other with the apparition. I recall that in childhood I was never in the least afraid when Saint Nicholas with mitre, crozier and cope (how necessary and "liberating" are the effects of these attributes!) solemnly stepped into the nursery and called me from my mother's side to him. I would give him my hand in confusion, but the confusion, rather, of inexpressible joy, feeling life suddenly take on an improbable proportion in the broad light of reality; but when, fifteen minutes later, my younger brother, who had followed Saint Nicholas out into the hall and there found the hastily discarded masquerade costume, came into the room and walked up to me holding the long, gray beard firmly to his childish face, imitating the apparition in gesture and walk—I recall that as one of the most frightful moments of my boyhood; I dared not stir for fear, naturally not for fear of my brother, but for fear of the invisible graybeard who was present. To give a last example from my present, poet life, I am no longer afraid of a feeling or an idea that passes through me if I cannot separate the idea from the words that I have found for it, if words and image have presented themselves together; often I have stood in terror of the hovering of a wordless poem, powerless to bring about its union with the releasing imagery of words, put it away from me for years, using ostrich-policy, have forgotten it and felt myself plagued meanwhile and secretly persecuted by a sensation of void, as when ancient peoples supposed that barren parents were tormented by the souls of their unborn children, until suddenly a traditional verse form seems to be the incantation by means of which the words, understood in this connection as a sort of body, come to hand of themselves. Now the older I grow the less this fear shows itself so that I often think, and observe too in certain behavior, that only my blood is disturbed while my mental life is wholly free, more and more balanced and has even become cheerful and carefree. With an eye to that fact I called myself, in the opening lines of this paragraph, "not mad enough," for the question worries me whether the vanished frenzy held down in my body lurks in hiding there so that I now feel something like fear of my submerged self, of the dreaming brute here at my desk, a fear that forces me to exert my utmost strength to keep pace with him, to write what he dictates and, if possible, by a sudden stroke of all that remains at my disposal to compel him as a rider does a horse.

For all these reasons, which I have given you so extensively

and, alas, in such ridiculously long and wavering sentences and which I now pray you above all things not to read again in their clumsy form but to reconsider in the form in which they rose up in me, that is to say, in arrow-swift movement and, as I also surveyed them when all at once they cleft vertically through my personality, in a bird's-eye view—for all these reasons of which the horizontal succession must make a plea for your clement discernment, but which are, at least, the pathological prehistory, and contain the explanation, of the marvelous and permanently conclusive experience that I am just about to undergo, here, under this lamp on my desk, in an hour perhaps—I felt that summer evening, which will always be for me an unforgettable yesterday, in a mood as clear as crystal, as despairing as a genial sluggard at the end of his days and as inspired with the mood of that impossible "last attempt" as it is at all possible to be. This is all you need to remember of the foregoing if you wish to join me in the strange adventure that I feel is now close by, that stands behind the door, as it were, and will presently enter in word form.

After I had killed several hours more at my desk without result I betook myself to the city, on the last tram, and a while after midnight found myself at the Vijverberg in The Hague, but without paying the least attention to the most beautiful scene that has ever been created in any city of the world, although, as you shall hear, it had kept me particularly occupied for some time past. I sat down on one of the benches that are ranged under the trees along the water and began, softly and gently, to whistle a melody that was probably suggested by the mood of the hour. I already cursed the decision that had brought me at such an hour into the city: now, I reflected, I should have to walk back to the house and would it not have been more sensible to remain seated quietly at work under my lamp? I could have looked over my notebook, in which I write down fragments and opening words of poems as they come to me from time to time, perhaps I could have made a correction here or there or, who knows, have completed a verse; and if that did not work I could have finished off some correspondence and in any case I should have done better to go quietly to bed, a book in hand, to read until sleep overtook me, and so on—when the Pied Piper of Hamlin, whom I recognized at once from Robert Browning's poem, which at one time I could recite from beginning to end, he it was, without a doubt, this tall, thin man in a Russian

blouse of red and yellow that was gathered together high at the waist with a scarf and then fell right down to his feet, with the pointed hood of Pinocchio and with the flute, on the end of a red and yellow scarf, stuck into his belt like a dagger, almost hidden under the folds—when the Pied Piper stepped right up to me with the friendliest bow, took a seat next to me on the bench and leaning nearer spoke:

"How can I serve you, Nijhoff, now that you have called for me?"

I assure you—and you will believe me if you will recall the third "because" above or will take another glance at the recollections of my childhood that follow it—I assure you that I was neither astonished nor afraid when I saw the Pied Piper approach and take a seat beside me, nor when he spoke to me. On the contrary, I took the opportunity to observe a few particulars of his appearance, which agreed entirely with the figure that I had imagined him. He had, for example, gray hair cut very short, narrow eyes which were light blue to the very whites, a swarthy, weatherbeaten face that was really much too small for his height and a small head that wagged slowly but regularly to and fro on the long, flexible neck. No, I cannot but say he pleased me; he was much more familiar than I had expected him to be, supposing that one could expect to meet the Pied Piper. But when, after the few words of introduction, he suddenly called me by name, right off, as if in everyday speech, I was thrown into such a state of shock as must befall the suddenly wakened somnambulist. A surprising dizziness, a distressing weakness forced me to clamp both arms firmly to the rail of the bench in order not to collapse. I had the sensation for a moment of being flung into nothingness, I tumbled through a pit, whirled star-swift into space, was dumped head over heels out of the world into the universe, nothing but a kite from which one has suddenly cut the string. The discovery of this comparison, which cost me a superhuman effort, brought me back to my senses, and I knew why the faintness had seized me. By uttering the strange word that my name became in his mouth, the Pied Piper had given me to understand that just as I had recognized him I was to him also no stranger. I already belonged to his world, who knows for how long or in what position he considered me rightly as one of his own kind. What had I to do with him, or ever had had; where, when? The vaguest recollection of it had completely uprooted me for a moment.

He repeated his question: "Were you in need of me that you whistled just then?"

But now I was wholly master of myself and with recovered confidence, relieved, I burst out presumptuously:

"Yes, of course"—with mocking unconcern—"I need you and so I whistled the tune with which you lured me, as a youngster, into the Koppelberg. I remember very well that when the dark grotto was shut fast behind us, and all the children pressed about you in terror, you promised to make up for our irrevocably lost parents by always coming to our aid if we should but whistle or hum the alluring tune. I have forgiven but not forgotten you"—I added laughingly, even clapping him on the shoulder—"for you never hold a grudge against anyone for such a tune, nor do you ever get free of it again!— But now, to business: I have been working this long while on a poem that must have for its setting the Vijverberg which has always attracted me, I do not know why. Every time that I come from Leiden, go through the Haagsche Bosch along the Hertenkamp and Korte Voorhout and approach the corner of the Tournooyveld where the museum is—every time, at sight of the broad sheet of water and the profile of the city around it, I am filled with rapture, deep homesickness and an overmastering urge toward a noble and great deed. As a boy I used to stand there for hours and I planned to describe all this in a great poem: fantastic sham battles were to be staged on the water with ornate tapestry-hung boats, flags were to be draped between the trees, while on the island a festival banquet was set up. Later, during my military service, when I went from the barracks into town, the same deep feeling always flowed through me as I came to this point: it was as if I had to swear an oath, a solemn oath with my hand upon the ensign or on the head of a child. In my brimming heart would sound a masculine music, the Wilhelmus anthem, and there would come again that overwhelming urge toward the great and noble, to die for the fatherland or to look after the affairs of the republic with broad and clear understanding, quite mild and fatherly. And still, today, I pass here often and wonder in bitterness why I have not become such a one as he" (and I point to the statue of Willem II) "who stood for his country in Quatrebras or as he" (and I point to Johan de Witt) "who was our best citizen."

I was silent and stared over the pond that rippled under the moon in the silvery reservoir. Over me the trees locked tight the silence that followed my words. On the further side age-old

façades, crenelated walls and dungeons reflected a silhouette of our great past in the midst of the city.

The Pied Piper smiled, nodded and turned to me:

"And how far have you advanced on the poem?"

"That is just why I called you," I answered seriously. "Years ago a few lines occurred to me that, in spite of their crudity, contain perfectly for me the idea that I have just described: four wooden verses, which have finally become a frame from which I cannot think myself free. And now I hoped that you"—here I broke down, for what had I actually expected of him?—"that you," I went on, "might be able to make this dead wood bloom as once did Tannhäuser's staff."

Then I selected a strophe from my long poem, which was to become a counterpart of Huygen's *Voorhout,* and I heard myself speak in a voice that seemed as unreal to me as if I were reading something, quite without connection, from a book lying open by chance.

> I know no city of the world does yield
> More beauty than this broad quadrangle field:
> Prague nor Paris—no, nor are there any spots
> Where one strolls from the Tournooyveld to the Plaats.

My voice broke off as if I had shut the book from which I read.

"The question is," said the Pied Piper after a pause, with that peculiar smile that Browning drew with such mastery when he described his lips "where smiles went out and in," "the question is that your whistling was done with the mouth and not with a flute. You are weak from deep emotion, quivering from exertion and gratify your speech rather than your hearing. Moreover, the scale is limited, and through all this you must steel yourself and restrict yourself to a certain matter-of-factness that is in strange conflict with the tenderness of your intentions. But have you any idea of the freedom and power an instrument lends us? The lips can sing only of what the heart is full, but every flute is a magic flute and fills the empty hearts of other men with song. For the rats, I sang of raisins and bacon, of open provender casks, of a land without poison or traps; for the children, I sang of toys and cakes, of boats and gypsy-carts, of a land without school or bedtime." Thoughtfully he stroked the flute of soft, straight reed that stuck in his belt at the end of colorful scarf. "I shall advise you to begin for the present as follows: describe only the experiences of other men. Sympathy is no moral duty, it is an inborn passion and finds its source in the attraction that magnetically

binds all flesh. For your own sake develop that passion, make yourself conscious of it and live and think in the feelings of other men. Only in that way will you be free of yourself, that is the aim. If this is too slow, then keep a diary, and every time that you are possessed with the desire to listen to your own feelings write down what occurs to you and that with as much daring as possible, with exaggeration, literary delight and self-pity. If, however, you take up verse form—only the feelings of others. Is there something wanting, for instance, in one relation or other in friendship or in love: jot down your own sentiments in the diary but try to express the attitude and grief of your friend in a poem. You will observe how strong you manage to appear in contrast to her, and for that matter, in contrast to yourself. Be prudent, lest your own voice cry out, be most prudent, lest you begin by losing the whole world and all it is worth for the sake of making verses of your own emotions. Do not willingly do that. Wait until you are free, wait until you have become a stranger to yourself, until you begin to lead a double life, as it were. To everyone there comes a time when he sees himself step out of his own life. But for many that moment comes only late, late in life, as it runs toward the close."

He had risen, and I perceived in his attitude the wish to depart. I asked him to stay a little longer, but he merely said: "I shall just see you home by the shortest way."

With a jerk I was up and mechanically walked on with him.

"Now, as to that Vijverberg poem," he continued after a few steps, "the ancients were not mistaken in giving substance to such natural sentiments and earthly inclinations in local gods. In that way, at least, they released the emotions, and such autochthonic, almost animal sensation must itself be carried out of human nature. But your modern sensibility, egocentric and anthropomorphic, is of no use. You would make a weeping dandy of a water god and a Salome of a wood nymph. Not for nothing, indeed, have saints, kings and poets existed. Go to work in this way: pay attention first of all to what, if you have let yourself go, the diary affords you. Read it over carefully and then seek in history or within your own sphere for a figure that approximately represents such a feeling for the fatherland, the national anthem and the refined republic of seamen and artists, and whoever it may be—Huyghens or Saint Martinus—call his figure up in your poem. He will come, as you will see, and will bring with him all that you need. You have only to sit down and move your fingers over the flute."

We had now come near the Gevangen Poort, where the Pied Piper stopped and, as if we had come to the appointed place, shook my hand in parting. I reminded him that he had promised to accompany me to my house.

"But by the shortest route, I told you," said he smiling, "do you not see that we are already there?"

There is a tea-shop next to the Gevangen Poort, and on the first and second floors above it the proprietor gives you the opportunity to rest a little in a cosily arranged tea-room, to enjoy the view over the Kneuterdijk and to try his tea. There is an inner stairway for the staff, but the public reaches the rooms from the Plaats by a winding stairway in a tower specially constructed for it outside of the shop. This little tower, though it does jut out a bit, forms a whole with the Gevangen Poort and the tea-room; it has always irritated me as a product of bad taste that instead of contrasting strongly and honestly in its modernity assimilates itself fraudulently, like a spurious antique, to the adjacent Gevangen Poort.

We stood on the steps of the tower, at the door that is made of light-colored oak planks cut lengthwise. Once more the magician shook my hand, smiled and left me, gliding like a shadow with long soft strides through the Poort.

Strange: although I was certain, just as I reminded the Pied Piper of his promise to accompany me to my door, that I was not yet home, strange, when I saw the dancing skirt of his colorful tunic disappear and I turned again to the oak door, I was standing without transition on the clinker path in the untidy, dry grass of my garden in the suburb, recognized at once my green-painted front door and, as a matter of course, pulled my key out of my pocket. With it I opened, as the most natural thing in the world, the door of the tower stairs as if it were my own house door. When I began the climb, it occurred to me vaguely that the stairs seemed longer and higher than usual, that above the banisters were narrow windows which I do not have at home, that through these slits I caught distant views of The Hague in the moonlit night: rippling water, the head of De Witt's statue on the Plaats suddenly close by, a little later the garden of the palace where once, as soldier, I had stood on sentry duty, the long gully of the Laan van Meerdervoort, the towers of a new church in Zorgvliet, the thick row of trees on the Ouden Weg, and more such pictures, which actually, to my reassurance, alternated with prints along the wall of my own staircase, an engraving by Redon representing a man balancing an enormous cube on his shoul-

ders, Dürer's "Maria with the Monkey," the inn with a boat near it by Jan Steen—until at last I reached my own upper apartment, looked for mail on the little table in the hall and hung my hat and coat on the rack. Just as I always do when I come home of an evening I felt my way in the dark along the walls of the hall without putting on a light, reached the bathroom, ran the comb through my hair and took a draught of water; things I always do if I intend to sit down to work again. Then I turned off the light there and again felt my way along the walls of the dark hall until my hand found and turned the knob of my study door.

At once, on entering, I perceived through the opening door, by a vague light on the wall, that I had left my shaded study lamp lit on the desk. The shade is a large hat, impervious to light, such as the Chinese use in the rice fields so that the lamp lights only the table cover and leaves the rest of the room in darkness. I like, now and then, to lift my head from my work and to look over the shade into the nightlike room and then, when my eyes have gradually become accustomed to the dusk, to glance down at the white paper and my hand upon it with the pen in the circle of light on the table.

I left my lamp burning, thought I in the open doorway, suspecting nothing when suddenly I was frightened by the sound my chair makes when I shove it back in order to get up. My face became cold; gray death carried me away. Not daring to take another step from the threshold, I stood stock still in terror that momentarily ran wild in me, clammy with sweat, in the empty dizziness that had overcome me when the Pied Piper had suddenly called me by name, staring at the apparition that I saw would have risen from my chair but that was seeking support with his hands on the arms of the chair into which he had fallen back, whose eyes, equally stiff with fright, held mine fast in judgment.

I recognized him: that short, broad-shouldered figure in the seablue pajama jacket; it was I who sat there. He still held the pen in his hand and the upper half of the foam-white paper before him was covered with waving lines closely written. He threw the pen down upon the sheet and grasping with his hands tried again to rise out of my chair. In vain, he fell back further, so that the face with its dreadful stare, that never for a moment turned away from me, hung aslant and became visible under the lamp. His thin, limp, fair hair, lightly falling out of its part from dryness, had just been combed back and left free a forehead across which a dark wrinkle was furrowed. I saw the black nostrils in

his not fully matured, boyish face. I saw his clear, white teeth gleam between strangely drawn broad lips and with indescribable sinking of the heart I heard his slow, sucking breath come and go. Suddenly, as I stood in the open doorway, the words of the Pied Piper rang in my head: "Late, late in life does a man step outside of himself," and turning away I leaned my arm against the door frame, hid my head in it and burst into the bitter tears of bottled-up emotion.

I do not know how long this lasted, but I knew as if I had seen it with my eyes that the figure in the chair collapsed still further, that the staring of his open eyes slowly glazed, that his hand hung cold and slack beside the chair; and I heard in the deathly silence that his breath had ceased heaving.

Not so much from fear as from unbearable weariness I did not raise my head when, an immeasurable while later, my shoulder was lightly touched, and I felt someone cautiously push me aside in order to leave the room. For an instant, as he passed the doorpost, he stood next to me, at my own height, and spoke with a voice that is mine, I think, in moments of deepest tenderness when my consciousness is on the point of losing itself.

"Do you know that . . . has come home and is upstairs, asleep?" and glided away soundlessly as a shadow in a mirror.

The word I did not write was faintly sighed, a whisper, the name of my little son. With a jerk I stood erect and without casting another glance into the empty room, for I knew there was no longer anyone there, I turned, felt my way through the hall and climbed the attic stair and stopped at the nursery. I stepped in and closed the door after me and locked it as if I were being followed and the pursuers were close on my heels. The narrow room, of which the window took up the whole width of the wall opposite the door, was already dimly lit by the glimmer of dawn over the city. On the left, against the long wall, stood the child's cot and on the table next to it a night-light flickered, a thin and yellow flame in the glimmer of the morning haze. Around this light stood a picture of my wife, a bronze statuette of Saint Anthony and a toy automobile, his dearest possessions. I sat on the edge of the bed and gazed at the sleeping boy. He slept quietly, his head sidewise on the pillow, one little hand, relaxed, stretched toward his two "children," Jan and Kees, a sailor and a teddybear which by day he already neglected but which still accompanied him to bed at night. I was not in control of my emotion, and hot tears streamed down my face. The child, however, was not wakened by my sobs, at which I wondered, for I had frequently noticed that

he became restless whenever I looked at him in his sleep. Now, however, he did not stir, his eyelids were not closed to the line of the lashes, and through his open mouth over which I could not resist placing my hand I felt the warm current of his breath. I bent over him and lightly kissed his straw-white hair in which I still detected a trace of the fragrance of the "land of milk and honey" as, in the old days now ten years past, I called his cradle. To be sure, other fragrances were added, too, of "sand in the sun" and of "dried flowers" and "iron and leather" but "the land of milk and honey" had not yet wholly disappeared, and with some astonishment I sought the impression of his body under the covers down to the feet and found it longer than I had thought.

Opposite the bed, in the other long wall, the door of the adjoining room stood open, the guest room. It was quite dark in there, I noticed from where I sat, for the shades were drawn down. I stood up to make sure that my conjecture was right. My wife was home. Looking around the edge of the door I saw her head with its heavy, fair hair on the pillow and heard her regular breathing. I was seized with an overwhelming feeling of gratitude, warmer and fuller than I could comprehend. In order not to waken them I stole back through the nursery, quickly and on tiptoe. I opened the door, hurried down the stairs and finally, at the hall door, leaning against my coat on the rack, gave myself up freely to the overmastering outburst. It was already broad daylight in the hall of the silent house when, passing the door of my study into which I did not look again, I reached my bedroom.

I undressed quickly but found, even as I half suspected, no pajamas on my pillow. I took no further account of it but wrapped myself without hesitation in a large, white sheet, stretched out full length on top of the bed and folded the sheet tightly over me, and so, arms folded across my chest, I lay staring for a while at the crucifix that always stands on my mantelpiece until, unexpectedly, I fell asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when I awoke. I went at once to my study, where the lamp was still burning. My pen, stretched out like a dead bird, lay obliquely across a pile of paper torn from the writing pad. And I was still standing thoughtfully by the draperies that I had drawn aside, gazing at that object I dared not touch, when I heard voices and laughter outside the window, and my wife walked into the garden holding our son by the hand. They came straight from the station, returning from a

long journey; they wanted to surprise me and had not let me know when the train arrived. She was carrying a valise, and he was thrusting Jan and Kees triumphantly up at me. I made the impression, they said afterwards, of having just been awakened by their homecoming.

Translated by WILHELMINA C. NIEWENHOUS

PART VI

NEW FLEMISH PROSE

Marnix Gijsen (Jan-Albert Goris)

ON THE GENIUS OF FLANDERS

IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPROVED SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURE, I DECIDED, before approaching my subject, to find out what the best writers had to say on the question we are about to discuss. In this process, I had a most unfortunate experience.

It so happened that the first book I picked up was by an American writer, whose name I shall charitably withhold. This author painstakingly examines the characteristics of the Belgian people and the factors that distinguish Walloon character from Flemish psychology. In a passage which seems to be the synthesis of this thinking and impressions, he arrives at the following conclusion: "The Walloons have a volatile character but are malicious; the Flemings are well-meaning souls, not too intelligent and even a little bovine." . . .

The perusal of this text plunged me into deep reflection. I decided to abandon my scholarly ethnological research and rely exclusively on my own lights. It is by the vacillating clarity of my own personal observations that I permit myself to lead you.

Let us first examine the title of this discourse and arrive at agreement on its exact meaning. I suggest this in order to avoid what is very accurately called in Flemish an "oeverloos" (a shoreless) subject, that is, a subject without shores, which is at once broad and fluid, and which threatens at any moment to overflow to the right or left.

The subject comprises only two terms: "genius" and "Flanders." The word "genius" may seem a little pretentious, a little pedantic. One might have said: Flemish psychology, Flemish spirit, Flemish substance. And yet, what we are going to deal with is not exactly that. It is that, and, at the same time, something more. Genius is something that is actually a part of a person or a group, that determines his or its individuality, personality, being. Someone once referred to the "invisible genius of the city." This is its meaning. There must be a character of the Bronx and Brooklyn, as there is one of Athens or Rome. The

word does not, therefore, necessarily imply superiority of intelligence or of artistic creative power, but it is a sure criterion, a definite landmark.

Since the character of a people cannot be seen, since it can only be sensed empirically through its numerous external manifestations, I could easily enough claim to immobilize it, to materialize it for a moment before your eyes, and you would have the perfect right not to be convinced, not to recognize it, if you so wished. We shall deal, then, with what is exclusively characteristic of Flanders.

There is still the word "Flanders" or "Flemish." Here again, there is nothing precise, except the absolute necessity of circumscribing, of limiting, of being precise. Victor Hugo thought of Mons, in Hainaut, as a Flemish town, and Octave Mirbeau found Liége "an exceedingly pretty city of Flanders." There have been several "Flanders" during the course of the centuries: one has been called "Flemish Flanders," another "French Flanders," which, to our partisan ears has the wee, small sound of a paradox. In the beginning hemmed in between the North Sea and the Scheldt, Flanders stretched eastward to the Meuse, but she has been chopped off at the base. She had conquered Brabant, Antwerp, and Limburg; she had lost Lille, Valenciennes, Tourcoing, and Arras.

When Rubens spoke of *la Fandra la mia carissima patria,* his mind probably did not stop at Enghien or Wavre, but he included in this tender phrase everything that fell within the spiritual orbit of Flanders. Apart from the Principality of Liége, this probably included all of present-day Belgium. When the Canadian poet, John McCrae, wrote his beautiful poem "In Flanders' Fields the Poppies Blow," he certainly did not mean to imply that the poppies on the graves of English soldiers killed in Hainaut had merely strayed there by mistake.

At the beginning of the Flemish literary renaissance of the nineteenth century, there was a slogan used which, like all slogans, was partly false:

"De Taal is gansch het volk"

"The language is the whole people": those who speak Flemish, those who express themselves in Flemish would, therefore, be Flemings, and, of course, no one else would be. This is an obvious error and too easily refuted. Character is revealed in hundreds of different ways, of which language is only one, and, on the other hand, so many men, unquestionably heart and soul of

Flanders, have expressed themselves through the channel of another tongue than Dutch, or used other means of expression than language.

We can conclude, therefore, that in order for a person or a thing to be Flemish, a certain physical contact at least is needed with the region, with its atmosphere, its monuments, its culture, and, above all, with its people.

It follows that the physical appearance, the size of a being or of a group has an influence on the very nature of that being or group, and, inversely, that the size, the quantitative aspect of a thing or group may be determined by the essence itself of the object. In other words, there is a close relationship between the physical and spiritual features of a people.

The fact that there are only 4,500,000 Flemings in the world is of importance. It is of no less importance that this group of modest numbers is surrounded by entities, more powerful and at least as homogeneous, if not more so, than itself.

This was not always the case. In the Middle Ages, and even in the Burgundian period, Flanders, strong and united, was surrounded by a swarm of small states, and her wealth in gold as well as in manpower assured her a preponderant position within the strange European mosaic of that time. This was the moment when she was able to express herself with the greatest freedom, with the fewest restrictions, as equal to equal.

Before burying herself in the penumbra of the Jesuitical mediocrity of the seventeenth century, she produced Rubens. It was necessary to wait until the middle of the nineteenth century for her to wrench herself free, to refind her faith, forget the prudence and false wisdom that the masters of smug mediocrity had lavished upon her during the entire seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here then, is a hiatus of two hundred years which will explain many a thing about the real, vital forces of Flanders. Here then, is a halt, a breakdown of the creative faculty, a moral diminishment, which will also tell us something about the basis of that fugitive reality we all pursue.

Those who are too easily discouraged by ancient scripts or who are unable to penetrate the mysteries of an archaic language, say all too easily that the Flemings are people who feel the outside world as an hallucinatory reality, who are powerfully obsessed by it and whose painters and writers express it and interpret it with an intense sensual lyricism. No, everything must be given its proper place, no factor should be neglected in that powerful symphony which expresses the soul of a people—neither

the heavy, sumptuous tones of our tapestries, nor the strident cries of Bacchic poetry, nor even the tang and violence of insult and gross popular obscenity. For a work of art is not conceived in a vacuum, painting does not suddenly loosen itself, without warning, from the monotone of history. It springs from the interruptions themselves, from the hesitations, the weaknesses and the mistakes. It is nurtured by time as well as by the masses. In a people, everything holds together.

Paul Valéry, and he is the only witness I shall call to my assistance, described the Flemish character in the following way:

"This race, distinguished by a special alliance of impulsiveness and languor, of violent activity and a tendency toward contemplation, which is passionate and patient, sometimes sensual to the point of fury and again completely detached from the physical world, withdrawn within the mystic castles which the soul secretly builds upon the confines of intelligence and of night."

In other words, Mr. Valéry says, as does everyone else but certainly better than everyone else, that the Flemings are at once sensual and mystic. Is this correct?

In its broad outlines, the portrait is probably true, but it is not very distinctive because, when you come down to it, it must be admitted that the Spanish are "mystic and sensual" too, and the Italians as well, and, to a certain extent anyway, this same dualism, this same mixture of contradictory factors may be found among most of the peoples of the Christian world. Mysticism and sensuality are the very H_2O of the baptismal waters. The only difference is in the amount, the manner, the nuance.

For my part, I believe that the keystone of the Flemish structure is the fact that the Flemings are essentially peasants and inhabitants of small towns: eighty per cent of them live in the country; ten per cent live in towns of from 25,000 to 100,000 inhabitants; and ten per cent reside in what may be called, from a European point of view, large cities.

This is the practically immutable background of Flanders—this solid peasant mass which has held together through the centuries, which was assailed and massacred by the aristocracy in the twelfth century, which was admirably castigated by a great anonymous poet, which suffered all possible outrage, all rapine, all cruelties at the hands of the Burgundians, French, Spaniards, Austrians, and Germans.

The main characteristics of the Flemish peasant are no less repugnant to civilized people than those of any other rural population of Europe. He has the same mixture of craft, rapacity,

avarice, heartlessness, physical violence, meanness of spirit, the same absence of civic and military virtues, as are to be found almost anywhere else. Nothing has basically changed since the old days, when the peasants were called—and rightly so—*vilains.*

A peculiarity of Flanders is the extraordinarily unstable climate, which constantly forces them to be crafty with their land, never to put their trust in the morrow or even in the afternoon; nothing is certain in their lives or their production—nothing except absolute uncertainty.

The poetess Hadewych has put it very prettily:

> Seghet die landman; jegen avent
> sal men loven den scoonen dag.
>
> (The peasant says: "Don't praise
> the good weather until the day
> is done.")

This constant calculating, this incessant battle with inclement and brutally capricious elements has taught the Flemish country folk extreme precaution and almost complete skepticism. It has urged them into patient observation and taught them to see the details of Nature rather than her motivating principles. They have developed a cult of shortsighted wisdom, of a fragmentary philosophy, which is no philosophy at all, but rather a system of petty accommodations to life than a solid philosophic structure which would cast light on our problems and give meaning to our existence. And so, there are no, or few, philosophers in Flanders, but a plethora of amusing moralists.

The Flemish climate, which has neither rhyme nor reason, has made the Fleming highly sensitive to color, smell, volume, and all the physical appearances of worldly objects.

The great majority of Flemings are, therefore, realistically minded individuals, easily and constantly moved to tenderness by the smallest details of nature, by the atmosphere, by changes in climate, but too quickly forgetful that the drama of the world is not outside of us, but within ourselves. This is translated into a savory folklore, full of color and abounding with acute, but relatively unimportant, observations.

I have been able to compare certain parts of the early works of the great novelist Stijn Streuvels to brilliant meteorological bulletins. Indeed, on page after page of his early novels, he describes the weather somewhat as the landscapists of the seven-

teenth century paint for us, but with far too much insistence, the cloudy skies of Flanders. Only at the very end does man make his appearance in this countryside—he, the only living thing that matters and whose grandeur consists precisely in dominating, with a certain arrogance, the pretentious and cumbersome spectacle of elements and climates.

When our lesser masters paint calligraphic still-lifes, when our writers describe, with amusing and picturesque commentary, the various minute aspects of the countryside and its produce, it is always an attentive Flanders which speaks, which examines itself and which, in this contemplation, is sufficient unto itself.

But we know that this naive tenderness, occasioned by the petals and the trees, the insects and the cattle with their smells, their colors, their habits and their manias, is of hardly any importance. It may serve, at most, as an escape from the real problems of man, as a palliative for that ennui which, Pascal tells us, is at the bottom of the human heart. It is an evasion, a cowardice, a flight into the smug and mediocre.

From an artistic point of view, all this would be very discouraging if, from time to time, a miracle were not produced, if, in compensation, something splendid and marvelous did not arise from this mass of mediocrity. This occurred in the figure of the poet Guido Gezelle.

Gezelle was a believer, a Christian. He saw the world only in the light of religious principles. For him, all creation, which he loved and which he saw through a gardener's eyes, was but the image of God, a symbol of future life. Everything mediocre and amusing in the comfortable and savory realism of Flanders, was ennobled by his words.

Nowhere in the European literature of the nineteenth century, except perhaps in the writings of Francis Jammes, was so complete an understanding of nature sustained by so simple and profound a faith.

I will not violate Gezelle by translating him—it is almost impossible—but I shall give you a more modest example of typically Flemish writing.

Georges Chastellain, one of the historians of the Burgundian Court who, though born and educated in Flanders, wrote in French—for which he offers his excuses, incidentally—tells, in a famous passage from his chronicles, of a violent quarrel between the aged Duke Philippe the Good and his son Charles the Bold. The Duke is so troubled in spirit that, toward evening, he departs from Brussels on horseback:

"Les jours pour celle heurre d'alors estoient courts, et estoit jà basse vesprée quant ce prince droit-cy monta à cheval, et ne demandait riens autre fors estre emmy les champs seul et à part luy. Sy porta ainsy l'aventure que ce propre jour là, après un long et âpre gel, il faisoit un releng (dégel), et par une longue épaisse bruyne qui avoit couru tout ce jour là, vesprée tourna en pluie bien menue, mais très-mouillante et laquelle destrempoit les terres et rompoit glaces avecques vent qui s'y entrebouta."

(The days, at that particular time, were short and it was near first vespers when the prince did mount his horse direct, asking only to be left alone amidst the fields and by himself. It so happened that on that very day, after a long and bitter frost, there came a thaw, and through a long and heavy fog, which had prevailed the whole day through, there fell a rain, extremely fine but all pervading and which in intermingling with the wind, did drench the earth and break the ice.)

It is on a level with the best of Gezelle and Timmermans. It combines both Lemonnier and Claus; it is an utterly and superbly Flemish piece of writing.

It is not surprising that the love of the land and the things it produces has given the Flemish people a reputation for exacerbated sensuality. No one will deny that the Flemings tend toward sensuousness, but their supreme wisdom lies in the fact that they do so in a simple and bourgeois fashion. Our poets of the Middle Ages devoted long pages to a summing up of everything which they believed estimable in this world. They listed the fruits, the flowers, the victuals, the drinks—everything that might appeal to the senses—but these enthusiastic inventories hardly ever went beyond the point of a thanksgiving which closely resembles a catalogue. There are a few exceptions. One lucky day, I had the good fortune to discover a poem, buried in oblivion for four centuries, in the Library of Manuscripts at the British Museum—a poem by one of my fellow-citizens, the Antwerp poet Cornelis Crul, a superb poem which begins like this:

Ghij die appelkens, peerkens en nootkens maect,
Sijt ghelooft van uwer goeder chyere,
Van vlees, van visch dat zoo wel smaect
Van broot, van botere, van wijne, van biere.
Ghij cleet ons, ghij licht ons, ghij wermt ons met viere.
Ghij geeft ons ruste, blijscap en ghesonde.
Ghij spaert ons, ghij bewaert ons, heere goedertiere
En leert ons metten woorde van uwen monde.

Tleeft al bij u dat is in swereldts ronde
Tsij zijerken, tsij mierken, tsij vloe, tsij das.
Dies segghen wij u Heere, uut goeden gronde:
Benedicamus Domino, Deo gracias.

(You, who make little apples, pears, and nuts,
Be praised for your good cheer,
For meat and fish which taste so good,
For bread, for butter, for wine, for beer.
You clothe us, you light us, you warm us with fire.
You give us rest and joy and health.
You teach us with the words of your mouth.
All in this world live because of you
Be it a gnat, be it an ant, be it a flea, be it a badger.
Therefore we praise you, Lord, for good reasons:
Benedicamus Domino, Deo gracias.)

It is simple, direct, and touching. It is not perhaps great, but it is admirably pure, warm, and honest. It is the honesty of Saint Francis of Assisi. Reading this poem, one is struck by an innocence of heart and feeling found only among simple, sturdy people.

It has been thought possible, on the strength of Rubens' abundant anatomies, and by isolating this phase of his work from the rest of Flemish artistic and intellectual life, to ascribe to the people of Flanders a tendency toward sensual excess and an immoderate, almost animal, predilection for the pleasures of the flesh. Fromentin and Verhaeren have their share in this, and since their time, practically nothing has been done but repeat and amplify their ideas. However, on closer inspection, it can be seen, here as elsewhere, that the Flemish character is manifested in the same bourgeois forms, with the same lack of dramatic intensity, the same touching simplicity.

The most beautiful Netherlands poem of the Middle Ages—a pure work of art—is the "Beatrijs" legend. The subject is a familiar one. It is the legend of the vergeress. The Sister Vergeress Beatrice summons her childhood sweetheart, a young knight, to her convent and declares her love. They decide to flee together. Under cover of darkness, the knight carries her off on his horse and, as day breaks on a radiant May morning, they reach a sun-drenched glade. The young lover makes to Beatrice a suggestion commonly known as dishonorable. She objects, not from principle, not as a result of any sense of guilt, secret reserve or inner struggle of conscience. She has fully decided to see the adventure

through to the end. But certain forms should be observed, everything should be done in order and with proper decorum.

I give you the remarkable translation of Professor Adriaan J. Barnouw:

> He looked at that lovely one
> To whom he bore a steadfast love.
> He said, "Dearest, if thou approve,
> We should dismount and pluck a flower.
> This is a pleasant place and hour.
> Come and let us play love's game."
> She spoke, "What sayest thou, for shame
> Should I lie down in the wood
> Like women who earn a livelihood
> With their body boorishly?
> Then were there little shame in me.
> This wouldn't have come into thy mind
> Wert thou not of boorish kind.
> I have reason to be sad.
> May God curse thee for such bad
> Intentions. Speak of something else.
> Listen to the birds in glens and dells,
> How they carol and make glee.
> Their music will pass the time for thee.
> When I am naked in a bed,
> Neatly made with sheets and spread,
> Then mayst thou do thy will with me,
> To whatever thy heart prompteth thee.
> It maketh me sad and void of cheer
> That thou didst propose it here."

This extraordinary exchange of opinion is one of the few love dialogues in Flemish literature. One will note that there is nothing here reminiscent of the tormented and pathetic cries of Tristan and Yseult. At no point do the lovers involuntarily inflict upon each other those superb wounds upon which the beauty of amorous dialogue rests, and which, to the extent that it is rendered public, constitutes its real justification. At no point do they throw the solemn shadow of death over the traditional exchange of fantasy and affectionate desires. And finally, they make no appeal to the outside world, except as a side-track, a temporary sedative whose only purpose is to allow time to return everything eventually to its proper place.

At first sight, one might be tempted to say that the conception of life and love, as expressed in this brief passage, is not very ele-

vating and—supreme criticism!—without a moral. And indeed, it does not perhaps advance us in an understanding of the human heart or in the study of our passions, for, although the poet tells us that the gods prefer the depth to the tumult of the soul, we know, nonetheless, that only the sight of a wild inner disorder can move our tired consciences and sluggish minds.

There is another, even more pointed example of this solid, bourgeois background which forms the basis of the Flemish nature. Rubens was remarried at 52 to Helen Fourment, a girl of some sixteen or seventeen years. In a letter written to Pereisc, a humanist friend in Aix-en-Provence, he announced his second marriage in this way:

"I am resolved to marry again because I find that I am not yet ready for continence and celibacy; besides, if precedence is supposed to be given to mortification, we can also, in offering thanks to Heaven, enjoy what pleasures are permitted. I have taken a young wife, of honest but middle-class parents, although everyone tried to persuade me to make my choice at Court, but I was afraid of encountering pride, that vice inherent in the nobility, particularly in its women. I want a wife who will not blush when she sees me take up my brushes; in a nutshell, I am too fond of my freedom."

What a magnificent example of that solid harmony, that sense of proportion and prudence, that balance of the flesh and spirit which has always made of the great mass of the Flemish people an element of stability, solidarity and richness!

Perhaps I have given the impression that the spirit does not count for much in Flanders. Nothing could be further from the truth, for beyond that eighty per cent of country- and towns-folk, there is the twenty per cent of the Flemish population which dwells in cities. There is obviously more to being an intellectual than just living in a city, and besides, no one is even sure that it is a particularly desirable state, but in the urban centers it is difficult to escape being contaminated by the printed verb or by the spoken word.

The Flemish character is most clearly perceived within the framework of the community. For, outside of the solid peasant mass, the Flemish people are essentially a bourgeois people.

It is remarkable that the nobility of Flanders has never been an important factor in the life of the people. The Counts of Egmont and of Horne, decent weaklings, were, without any doubt, the pathetic victims, the martyrs, but certainly not the heroes, of liberty. Except in 1830, our nobility, like most nobility in fact,

was always essentially preoccupied with serving the Prince, no matter what Prince, believing, and in good faith, that they were thus serving the nation at the same time. The harshest reproach that the Flemings hold against this class of people is that for several centuries they have done everything to create a respectful distance between themselves and the masses of the people, and that rare are those who have tried to raise the population to their own level. History has punished this sin of omission!

Flemish city dwellers created in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries a masterpiece: the community, the municipality. They discovered the art of establishing order in the city, convulsed by violent turmoil, conflicting interests, and bloody passions. They accomplished the miracle of social organization—harmony and prosperity.

Like the Greeks, they tried several methods: democracy fought oligarchy, demagogy rent the delicate woof of democratic harmony, until finally they arrived at a middle way, a bourgeois regime. Broad common sense, moderation, had triumphed.

I need not tell you what the bourgeoisie is: in some people's eyes it is an abomination, in others' the salt of the earth. Léon Bloy said that "the bourgeois is a pig that wants to die of old age," but it was none other than the Flemish bourgeois who, according to local custom, inscribed, on the first page, as the first article of their laws:

"In dese stad sijn alle menschen vrij ende gheen slaven." (In this city, all men are free and none shall be slave.)

It is these bourgeois who resisted the knights and who, when it was necessary, defeated the Kings of France; these were the bourgeois who freely concluded treaties, as equal to equal, with the Kings of England. It is they who subsidized the Flemish primitive painters and who, later, accepted with understanding and gratitude the superb lessons in humanism taught them by that great bourgeois genius—Rubens.

Erasmus had already remarked, early in the sixteenth century, that there was nowhere else in Europe "as considerable a number of good average minds" as there were in Flanders.

These are the men who, from the beginning of the fifteenth century up to our days, have made great lawyers, unexcelled administrators, patient scientists. Their writings are forgotten, but let us be honest: What is still living of the numerous writings of Erasmus, apart from his delicious *Eulogy of Folly,* which everyone discusses without having ever read, and a few of his Colloquies? But all the writings of these diligent men, if lacking in

brilliance and genius, with the exception, perhaps, of Jansenius, have been absorbed into the body, into the very marrow of our national thought. Among them might be considered the work of Leonardus Lessius, *De Justitia et Jure,* which Archduke Albert had constantly at hand in rendering justice, as well as those innumerable treatises on law, ethics, finance, and administration, and, at the end of this long procession of writers destined for oblivion and today consulted by only a few specialists, might be seen advancing His Eminence, Cardinal Van Roey, son of one of the notables of Vorselaer, with his book *De Justo Auctario Ex Contractu Crediti* (Fair Interest in the Credit Contract). Here, then, is an element of permanence, consistency and continuity which it would be vain to deny.

Eventually so much balance, so much harmony and solidity would be almost painful and certainly irksome to us if we had not before us the charitable warning of Hippolyte Taine: "All this," he says, in his *Philosophy of Art,* in dealing with the Flemish character, "all this makes for rather short common sense and a rather broad happiness. A Frenchman would soon yawn at this, but he would be wrong. This civilization which seems stuffy and vulgar to him has its own unique value: It is healthy. The men who live here have that gift most lacking in us: wisdom and (a recompense which we no longer deserve) contentment." This contentment, whose delights the Touraine printer, an Antwerper by adoption, Christopher Plantin, has described in his *Sonnet du Bonheur de ce Monde,* flows from the extraordinarily home-loving character of the Flemish population. For at least three centuries, there has been no important migration. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there were fairly large population displacements. There were Flemish *treks* to Germany and Hungary. Attempts were made at colonization in the Azores and in other distant territories. There was a large Flemish emigration to England. More than twelve hundred Flemish words were absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary at that time. Flemish bankers even succeeded, in the fourteenth century, in driving the Lombards and Jews out of England. Flemish emigration only ceased when the indignant Londoners massacred en masse the entire Flemish colony at the time of Wat Tyler's revolt in 1381. The tables were ironically turned, for they used the technique of the Bruges Matines. In 1302, the French were massacred at Bruges if they could not pronounce without too strong an accent the difficult words *Schild ende vriend.* The Londoners made the Flemings pronounce the words *bread and cheese,* and if their pronun-

ciation was too close to *brood en kaas,* their lot was cast. The Flemish caught on. They stayed at home.

There is no question but that man most easily betrays himself by his purposeless gestures, by the things he does when he has nothing to do, by his amusements, his play. What does he do to escape the monotony of life, to shatter this contentment which often must seem like satiety?

Where the Flemish people are concerned, it is almost impossible to answer this question without bringing up for a moment the question of political history. For several centuries, the Fleming has felt himself humiliated and looked down upon, and this feeling is heightened to the exact extent that nationalist faith (one might even say "nationalist mania") has become the cornerstone of European politics. He has felt himself a second rank Burgundian, a second class Spaniard, Austrian, Frenchman, Dutchman, and, finally a second rate Belgian.

I do not say to what extent he is right or wrong. I am simply stating a fact.

During this long period of humiliation, in which he tenderly and fervently nourished his inferiority complex, he searched for a way out, a deliverance which would secretly give him confidence in himself and raise him in his own eyes. Before long, he began to make fun of his own misfortune, to brag about his deformities. He tried to disarm the criticism of his enemies or his masters by hastening to draw his own caricature. *Reynard the Fox* and the *Legend of Ulenspiegl* are both glorifications of the rogue, the scoundrel, the rascal.

There are hardly any romantic heroes in the Flemish Pantheon. If Spain is personified in *The Cid* and *Don Quixote,* Flanders is personified by Reynard, who in spite of more powerful forces, manages to live as he pleases, and by Ulenspiegl, an unscrupulous gamin who thumbs his nose at tyrants.

We are told that Louis XIV, when he saw the paintings of Teniers and Adrien Brauwer, said: "Take these wretches out of my sight." He could not stand the spectacle of those carousers in their smoky taverns, the tumbling about of those harlots, those animal brawls and doltish dances. His reaction is understandable. As a matter of fact, there was nothing for him to learn from this elemental humanity whose message was mainly directed to those who actually lived among these scenes.

In all Flemish painting, in all the literature of Flanders, ancient as well as modern, in short, at the basis of the Flemish character, may be found this will to ugliness, this urge to caricature

nobility of feeling, this obsession to inflict upon one's self the spectacle of a systematic deformation of everything worthy and significant in the social as well as spiritual order. This could be misunderstood; this tendency might well be considered a symptom of collective masochism, were it not almost wholly compensated for by one of the most precious of spiritual gifts—the resilient nature of the Fleming. Those who see in Flemish intellectual and artistic life only its noisiest manifestations, find it difficult to understand the delectabilities of the Flemish spirit in its most refined expression. Herein lies a treasure of vitality, a vivacity of spirit, a gift for verbal pyrotechnics and spiritual choreography which is generally unknown to those who only participate from afar in Flemish life and which becomes ever richer and more abundant, as Flanders again becomes conscious of her own forces.

The finest example, the most magnificent illustration of this youthful spirit, of humor sometimes macabre but always healthy and vigorous, is the painter Bruegel. Bruegel's work is abundant proof of that gracious subtlety of spirit to which I allude.

He is proof not only of a profound consciousness of the individual drama, but, confronted by social and political problems, he knew how to handle them without rhetoric and without recourse to extravagant gesticulations. Thanks to that fundamental optimism which lies at the base of Flemish character, he has remained—as an American critic says—"the most human of all the great painters."

The same spirit may be found in Karel van de Woestijne who is, with R. M. Rilke, the greatest lyric poet of Europe in the nineteenth century, as well as in the authors of the preceding generation and in those of the generation to which I—and very proudly —belong.

It is obvious that the Flemish character whose major outlines I have tried to draw has been subjected to foreign influences and even to violent assaults. If it is true that it resisted triumphantly and that it needed, in sum, only one historical novel to revive it again—*The Lion of Flanders,* written, incidentally, by Henri Conscience whose father was a French émigré—there is also not the slightest doubt but that it bears the imprint of its great neighbors.

Has the Flemish character borrowed from Germany?

I believe that, without being swayed by the circumstances of the moment, I can frankly reply in the negative. One would search in vain for any sort of trace whatsoever, in Flemish spiritual as well as artistic life, of a German influence in Flanders.

None of the masterpieces of mediaeval literature derived their subjects or inspiration from Germany, and if Dürer was able for a moment to influence the formal side of Flemish painting at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Flemish art, on the other hand, completely absorbed Hans Memling.

In modern times, German editors have paid court to certain Flemish authors, trying in vain to win them to their political cause, but the upshot has been that Flemish authors are read in Germany, not that Germany has influenced Flanders.

It is an incontrovertible fact that French influence in Flanders has been very strong, and that the French spirit, which combines moderation, clarity and grace, and, above all, impeccable logic, has considerably attenuated the Gothic sentiments which persisted long after the Middle Ages in Flanders and which, among other things, made the plays of Paul Claudel so popular in the smallest Flemish villages.

One might believe that French influence in Flanders was above all of a rationalist character. It is true that here and there a provincial notary, taking Voltaire for an atheist, announced himself one with the sage of Ferney, thinking thus to secure a lien on elegance and free thinking. In so doing, he demonstrated his stupidity as surely as do those American boys in their teens who purchase a translation of *Candide* in the second-hand book stores of Times Square under the assumption that they are acquiring pornographic literature.

No, one should not talk of French influence in Flanders in terms of Mr. Dekobra's literature. It goes a great deal further. Thank God it is more profound than that. At its best, it is eminently beneficial; it only becomes irritating in its numerous mediocre expressions. It serves as a judicious rein on the Flemish spirit—naturally inclined toward an unbridled romanticism—as a discipline, which it too often lacks.

There is no basic opposition between the French spirit and Flemish psychology. Political preoccupations on the part of each have alone aroused suspicions which a stabilized political harmony can fortunately put to rest.

And finally, there is England. It is strange to think that for a whole century the English were forced to defend themselves against Flemish expansion. There are a number of rhymed pamphlets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which put the English on guard against an imperialist Flanders and against those Flemings who ride too high and have too much money in their purses.

The Flemings have never, since the fifteenth century, feared being absorbed by England, and it should not be forgotten that this danger of absorption is the national nightmare of all small linguistic communities.

They have always felt at ease with England and the English. Jacob of Artevelde gave the first proof of this state of mind. Later Rubens, frankly Francophobe, at least in politics, was much more pro-English than he was pro-Spanish, and we know that Guido Gezelle found far richer spiritual nourishment among the English and American poets than anywhere else.

Herein is an historical trait, a current of sympathy which is sometimes hidden, but which should not be underestimated. It may be said of the majority of Flemings, without any fear of being wrong, what the chronicler Froissart said of Jacob of Artevelde, with pique and a certain astonishment: "His heart was more English than French."

Translated by MARY TAUSSIG

Marnix Gijsen (Jan-Albert Goris)

WHAT TO TELL THE MILKMAID

WHEN THE FRENCH TRIED TO IMPRESS THE NORTH AFRICAN ARABS with the marvels of modern machinery, airplanes and the like, the sons of the desert remained unmoved. When the French had really shown them the final achievement of mechanical ingenuity and asked for comment, the sheiks just nodded politely and said: "Why do you spend your precious time inventing contraptions to amuse people? Life is too short for that."

Do not blame the Arabs for that lack of appreciation of our mechanical age: they dispense with the trimmings around things, they know that you can't change the three basic events of life—birth, love and death. To a certain extent the people of Europe are also like that. We are told that a Normandy milkmaid went on milking her cow while all around her Yanks and Nazis were fighting in the meadow. A seven-year-old American girl, riding over a bridge, asked if it was riveted or welded; the Normandy milkmaid did not ask if the soldiers used bazookas or submachine guns, she went on about her usual business. If the Yanks tell her that the Empire State Building is that high, she will not be

interested, but she will listen eagerly if she is told what the milkmaid in Montana does on Sunday afternoon.

The trouble with the world (one of the troubles, of course) is that peoples do not know how to make conversation: as a rule they are boastful. The French say: we have the Eiffel Tower. The English say: we have the crown jewels in the Tower of London. In Baltimore they have the Duchess of Windsor's bathtub, and in Antwerp they have a shoulder bone of the giant who once ruled the city. It is a bone of a whale, but that doesn't matter. Every nation, every city seems to bring forward only those things which are exceptional and therefore not characteristic of its real existence, and the world is presented to us like a curiosity cabinet.

Something should be done about it: some way should be found so that the Americans who are swarming over Europe might forget about skyscrapers, ships built in the wink of an eye and airplanes that go faster than light and gossip. The Europeans should be told how America really lives.

They should know that the United States is an enormous but provincial country. That the *Penasco Valley News* reports not only world events but also informs its readers that Mrs. R. Waters has had her tonsils removed, that Esther Cartwright has the measles and Bobby Burns the mumps. That Joe Stillman was in town Tuesday selling hogs and that Lucius Hartford bought some flowery wallpaper to redecorate his house. They should be told that every well-to-do American family does not have a swimming pool, but that the youngsters go out to the old swimming hole and that every five years at least one of them gets drowned there.

They should hear about the American churches, not so much about the cathedrals and St. John the Divines as about the humble white wooden buildings with which every village is endowed. They should know that a sexton of the Congregational Church of Walla Walla is very much like the sexton of Bouillon. And they should be told that in every one of these houses of worship there is an old maid who plays an asthmatic organ while the dapper congregation remains consistently off-key. They should be informed that the pastor and the clergyman walk around in the village just like the curé, apparently idle and going nowhere in particular, but in fact navigating between the moral coral reefs of their flock and trying to improve whatever can be improved of their habits and morals. They should be told that the Evangelists in Iowa shout and yell at least as loud as the Redemptionists in Belgium, that a clergyman in Columbus is the spiritual replica

of the clergyman in Hilversum. If possible, it should be withheld from them that New York policemen filing out of St. Patrick's walk down Fifth Avenue preceded by a majorette whose anatomy cannot be considered a well-guarded secret, but if need be they can always be told that strange lands have strange customs.

They should be told about the American village, about the drugstore, the social rendezvous of youth, about that single soda high-school youngsters sip with two straws, which becomes in their lives the equivalent of the cup Brangäne served Tristan and Isolde. They should know about the way the boy greets his girl friend when he takes her out the first time to a dance—that "Hi!" a masterpiece of understatement which can express as many shades of sentiment as a Chinese syllable is apt to have meanings. They should know about the pink and light blue dresses the girls wear, baring lovely shoulders and still bony backs. They should hear about the chaperons and about the good-night and thank-you-so-much kiss, a mere formality, a receipt and a conclusion. They must hear about the square dances in the barns, not about the acrobatic feats of the Savoy in Harlem, but about the honest "swing-your-partner" procedure where the partner hesitates a little when confronted with a bulky female.

They should know that not all trains in America are manned by lewd Pullman porters ready to strangle girls in the lower berths, but that American trains look much like rolling maternity wards with uncounted thousands of babies who are going to meet their grandmas and grandpas. That in the stations, soldiers, as everywhere else, will whistle at the girl in the window or imitate successfully an appreciative wolf call.

They should know that schoolteachers here, as there, look painfully neat and resigned, that pale and bespectacled (rimless, of course) assistant librarians invariably wear flowery smocks which must prove to the world their tidiness but also their permanent longing for beauty.

They must be informed that all Americans do not play jazz from 8:00 A.M. till 12:00 P.M., although there are some of this kind, but that on summer nights they sit, in silent, devout rapture, thirty thousand of them, in open stadiums and listen to the noblest music man has written.

They should be told that an American park is like a European park, except for the presence of Mr. Baruch. That it is full of lovers, of gentle old folks, of children, of ice-cream vendors and of benevolent cops. That on Sunday afternoon people walk around in the parks in their best clothes, and girl friends photo-

graph each other, standing with a sugary smile next to the biggest rose bush, as if there were any connection between their budding youth and the floral display.

Not all Americans, they should learn, spend their time commuting from Hollywood to Washington; and thousands of Italians in New York assert with pride that they have lived and stayed twenty or thirty years *"in questo blocco."* They should be told that they are not always chasing money, but that many of them stop working when they seem to have enough to subsist for a while and go out simply to enjoy that complete three-feature program the Declaration of Independence promised: life, liberty and a chance to happiness.

They should know that the great symbol of American democracy, the initial step on the road to felicity, the first comfort in all the so many dramas of life is that cup of coffee one offers to those rescued from the sea as well as to those who are saved from sin through the Salvation Army. Frenchmen will offer a glass of wine—it will look suspicious. Belgians will offer a glass of beer —it will be lukewarm. Dutchmen will present tea—it will look like a dark and menacing brew, but nobody will be able to understand without comment what the American cup of coffee means.

They should know about the small American town at night, about the strange howl of the train when it hurries west or east, about the poolroom that is a place of perdition, about the diner where the sleepy waitress keeps up a motherly conversation with the soliloquizing drunk, about the lighted Christmas trees in front of the New England houses in the countryside, about the farmer who comes to town with his skinny wife and a carload of kids and, with muffled curses, repairs a punctured tire before driving home.

They should hear about the Middle West craftsman behind his glasses, as reliable and as conservative as a Dutch watchmaker, about the night watchman in the New Orleans warehouse, as philosophical and inarticulate as the old men who watched over the goods in the European harbors and who could at least report that something had been stolen, even if they were unable to prevent it.

They should hear about a *human* America, not about a race of supermen and glamor girls.

It is said of the Frenchmen that they are unhappy as soon as anybody does not want to kiss them on the lips; they want to be liked and even loved. Americans are a little bit like that, but it is far more difficult for them than for the French to accomplish

that ambition. They are handicapped by their own enormous and fantastic achievements. Europeans sometimes have difficulty in discovering the man behind the powerful machine, and after all it is the man who counts. We do not like people for their greatness; we like them for their weaknesses. Caesar used to hide his baldness by wearing his laurels. It would be a good thing if the victorious American on European soil took off his laurels and showed himself as he is: a simple, likable human, the salt of this good, lovely, brave earth.

Gerard Walschap

PEUTRUS

I ONCE SAW PEUTRUS CLIMB UP THE SPIRE, ALONG THE OUTSIDE, UP fifty-two metres. He ran there from his house, caught hold of the lightning conductor and within ten minutes sat on top against the weathercock. From everywhere in the fields—it was about one o'clock—people saw him climb; at the cross he looked no bigger than a cat. The village policeman was busy harvesting, too far from home to fetch his gun; he said: "I had a good mind to shoot him down." When Peutrus was almost down again, he saw his father waiting for him with a strap. Peutrus scrambled up again and then ran along the gutter, all along the nave of the church. That meant risking his life again; if one fell off there, every bone in one's body would be broken, of course. Somewhere near the vestry he slithered down nimbly, crossed the churchyard, went through the hedge and into the fields.

That was the sort of fellow he was; it had never been possible to do anything about it; he had been like that since he was little. At home they continued to call him Peutrus but in the village he soon had his name; "Peut" they said for short, just as they pronounce "put" in Bruges and that neighborhood.

If you had known the old Biezemans, his grandfather—but he is dead now—you would know from whom Peut got it. The grandfather was a squat little fellow, but with broad shoulders, as strong as a horse and as nimble as a cat; a hard worker all his life, and a fierce fighter. A good man, but when he had had a pint he became pigheaded and nagging; he had to fight. His name was Wies, and that is what one had to call him, too. One

could make him raging mad by patting him on the shoulder in a friendly way and saying, "Hello, Wieske." An innkeeper once gave him a high-chair on purpose. Wies could not reach the floor with his feet. They were playing cards. Wies sat hemming and hawing and did not pay attention to the game. Behind him they stood smiling and winking. Then someone fetched a bench: "There, Wieske boy, put your feet on that." But this man got the bench on his head and if he had not gone out of the door quickly, Wies would have knocked it to pieces on his back instead of on the door arch. After that he tore his jacket off and shouted: "Come on, if you are all so big! Come on, damn it." There were eight of them. "Come two at a time"; then he counted eight windows in the inn. "I'll throw one into the street through each window."

Yes, he had guts. If there was any fighting going on anywhere, he ran up and tore them apart. "What's this?" asked Wies. They explained the case to him. "Don't both talk at once; first you, and now you." Then Wies said: "You are right," and if the other was not content with that, he flew at him himself. If people fought in a group, he helped the side that was a man short.

For a bet he once raced Joelekens Gust, also a hardy man, to Lippeloo church and back—two hours. Gust was behind and shot up a shortcut. He thought he was ahead, but when he stopped at the big house and was on the point of letting himself down on the threshold, Wies came out with his second pint, already half emptied, in his hand, and asked innocently: "It was probably muddy on the shortcut too, eh, Gust?" Gust said he had seen no shortcut. "You're a good-for-nothing," said Wies irritably; "but you should not have lied; I don't want that." Gust insisted that he had seen no shortcut. Thereupon he had to fight again for the five francs they had bet. "You can still earn them."

For sixty-five consecutive years Wies walked with the procession to Scherpenheuvel. The sixty-third time he could hardly follow; a man of seventy-seven years, what could you expect? But he did not give it up; he kept on. Afterwards he complained that it was no longer so serious as it used to be and that it consisted entirely of young people. "Next year, I'll go alone." When the time came, he started off alone in the evening, with his sandwiches in a kerchief and some clogs on his stick. The procession started as midnight struck; by that time he had already tramped five hours. At one o'clock the next day he arrived at Scherpenheuvel, two hours before the procession. He performed his devotions, lay down to sleep on the grass round the church; at seven

o'clock in the evening he went to eat something with a cup of hot coffee, bought a fresh loaf and started off again. At half-past four the next afternoon he arrived home in the village; the procession, half an hour later. But all the people were by then standing outdoors to watch for the procession, and when he saw that, he suddenly straightened up and held above his head the flag of Scherpenheuvel, which he had tied to his stick. They all cheered and cried; not one that did not shout and have to blow his nose. "Go it, Wies! Bravo, boy! Seventy-eight years and such a pilgrimage, walking all alone for two days on end!" He felt as if he were intoxicated with glory and happiness; two men ran to the church and rang the bell for him as for the whole procession. He felt a lump in his throat and began to sing: "Oh maid, so pure and fair!"

But the following year the procession passed him at Leest, still two hours from home. At Thisselt he remained sitting three quarters of an hour in the inn, and as night fell he came home by shortcuts. Everything had gone against him; the leather had come off his clogs, and so on. "But next year . . ." And the next year he was dead; he did not have to go again; sixty-five times had been enough.

In the case of Peut there was more devilishness than had ever been in the case of Wies. Things like that are often the fault of the parents; a child that is well brought up does not go wrong so easily. At Biezemans', it was a strange household. Trien, the mother, one could hardly make out. Sometimes she was rough and cross with the children and at other times stood laughing like a fool at the very same thing. She had large eyes, without lashes, which always watered. No matter what she was telling or heard told, she always wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. Biezemans himself, the father, was tall and thin, and a witty wag away from home, but in his house he did not open his mouth. To his wife not a word; the children could crawl over his head, he would snarl for a moment and that was all. But once he was out and with other people, he was the entertainment of the village. A dry humor. And then there was Karool, Trien's brother, a giant of a man who squinted and stuttered and was occupied with all sorts of learning, every two years with something else. With photography he was busy the longest. He would stick under the black cloth for half an hour, then "Loo-loo-look up!" and then he would pull. It was not to earn money; he put money into it; but if you wanted several prints, you had to pay. Occasionally he went to Brussels, and if he saw anything special,

he did not hesitate to ask: "Ho-ho-how does that work, sir?" He spoke learnedly of Belgian industry, of the distance to the moon and of Italy's abutting on the sea on both sides.

At Biezemans' they did not care for him, neither the little ones nor the big ones; but he just said, "Duffers!" and let them have their way. So nobody was boss, and each did what he wanted.

Peut smoked from his sixth year. The pigeon fanciers, who came to have their pigeons entered on Saturday evenings, let him draw at their pipes, drink from their pints, and sometimes gave him a cigarette. He was able to do it and it amused them; nobody forbade it. In the nursery school he swore at the Sister, and once he pulled off her wimple. Her hair was short and badly cut, just as if the rats had been at it at night.

Sometimes Trien knocked the cigarette out of his hands; at other times she laughed with the pigeon fanciers. One evening she came running from the kitchen into the pub, roaring with laughter; Peut, furious, was after her with a poker. It amused her; what a fellow! But the fellow struck, and it hurt pretty badly; she became angry herself and started hitting back. In a powerless rage he lay down on the floor, kicking; that was a habit of his, to be ragingly angry, to scream and upset the whole village while he threw himself on the floor. Then she laughed again. "Just look at that choleric fellow!"

The master at school also did not know how to manage him and as a rule did not shrink from giving him a beating. He had a whip, a ruler and a long beanstick for it. The beanstick suddenly got you on the head when you sat chatting with someone. For the ruler he came up to you; those that sat in the way had to creep under the forms till it was over. For the whip you were dragged out of your form and laid over his knee. The master was a verger from Flanders; he had got into the school during the education conflict.

Peut caught hold of the beanstick before it touched his head and broke a piece off; when he got some of the whip, he bit the master in the calf. Otherwise he was an extraordinary pupil. At home he wrote on a board that was hung on the shutter: "Pigeon-fanciers! Entries for Quiévrain on Saturday evening at 8 o'clock," and how much the prize was and that there were twenty-six regulators for hire. In the left-hand corner he drew on his own initiative two pigeons billing and cooing. The master stopped in front of the board. "Not a single mistake! Oh, that is fine, Petrus!" Karool made him change "Pigeon-fanciers"; it was low Flemish; "In French they don't say it like that. It should be

am-am-amateurs." He gave him an old atlas; let him draw the outline of Belgium and put a dot in it for the village and another for Quiévrain-in-de-Walen.

A ferocious heart beat in that Peut; you could not make him out. Trien could do what she wanted with him because she almost always laughed at his tricks. He caught hold of a half-grown pig by the front paws and danced round the dung heap with it. Trien stood leaning against the wall, laughing. "Peutrus, stop it! I shall die of laughter!" He rushed to her and kissed her on both cheeks; but a simple peasant boy does not kiss his mother. He had this wild tenderness, and for the rest he was a ferocious fellow. Once he caught a strange cat on their loft near the dove-cot. He caught hold of it by the neck, went downstairs with it, held it down on a block of wood, and smashed its head with a great big hammer; it made one go cold all over. He had a dog which he loved like a human; he trained it; if you dared approach it you risked disaster. But he seized strange pigeons and pulled their heads off; Jefke the shoemaker lost all his white ones.

As they grew up the children of Lowie Biezemans began to differ more and more, like animals and flowers. At the beginning they had all been alike. Mie, the eldest, remained simple and became ungainly. She did not grow any taller, but spread out in lumps of fat and jelly, and she no longer combed her hair. Gust and Pol shot up tall and thin like their father. Gust was a bright-eyed and quiet rascal. Pol was a dreamer and looked pale. The youngest, Martha, was also on the pale side, an upright and good child.

She gave Biezemans pleasure; he put her on his cart and took her along wherever he went. She sat quietly behind him and he stood with his legs wide apart and the reins in the hand that was in his trouser pocket. The left one he put to his mouth when he called to anyone, generally in rhyme: "Good morning, Marie! Glad you to see!—Sooken, turn to me; on your back is a flea!" One could not understand that at home this gay man was so sour and taciturn and did not even look at his children, except at the youngest. After all, there should be a father in the house; especially Peut should have had one. He now had his foolish mother on his side and tyrannized his brothers and sisters unchecked. For a long time they let him go ahead and get involved in his evil doings. Here they got a drubbing, there the dog was set on them. But when Peut once spoke of a pistol as long as his arm, loaded with six cartridges, and "I won't say who will be shot,

but this evening it will be his turn, and the day after tomorrow they will put him in the grave," they gave him away, all three of them at the same time. They were trembling; but Trien laughed at them and immediately went out into the street to tell the neighbors. "What a head that child has! It's strange!"

But one evening a shot was fired in the barn, and they all jumped up and cried: "Bah! our Peutrus!" Biezemans put Martha down from his lap, saying: "If I don't break his bones now . . ." went out, was nearly at the barn, turned round, put his hands into his trouser pockets, went in a leisurely way in at Jefke the shoemaker's and said: "Good evening, family Verstappen; I'll take a chair; I've come for a chat." And the whole evening he made them laugh. But meanwhile Trien and Karool stood in the barn with their lantern, and there sat Peut on the stack with father's double-barrelled gun. He was hunting the rats, just sitting there in the dark, and, at random had shot a tile to pieces. Karool said: "Co-co-come down, you rascal!" Peutrus called: "No-no-no, nu-nu-nuncle Ka-Ka-Karool!" Suddenly the double-barrelled gun fell onto the floor, the shot went off, and Trien, screaming wildly, ran away. Biezemans said to Jefke, the shoemaker: "Stay right there, Jefke boy, it is our Karool trying out my double-barrelled gun." But Karool was running up the ladder; this time Peutrus should be plucked! When Karool was halfway up, Peut seized the ladder at the top and held it straight up. "Go down this minute, or I'll throw it over backwards!" That would have meant death; it was a question of going down or having his spine broken. Karool went down, took a flail from the nail, beat mightily and angrily with it but hit nothing but a thick oak beam. In the dark, Peutrus showed his teeth in mad delight. Here in the dark barn it was a question of life or death; a stutterer who could not spend his rage with his mouth and had to do it with his hands against a ferocious young snotty-nose, half a devil. They both thought of the double-barrelled gun at the same time. Peutrus could not reach it; Karool looked at him for a moment, then went out and locked the barn door. And the pranks got worse as time went on. Those who had not cared began to regret it. His first enemy was Karool; between these two things were never again straightened out. One fine afternoon Peut stood at the church square with Uncle's camera and all the new plates. Some young fellows allowed themselves to be snapped, first seriously; afterwards they pulled faces and put their caps askew. Suddenly Karool stood there. It was his camera; he had put his money into it; the plates were expensive; it was his only

love and recreation. He knew for certain that he would stutter; perhaps he would not be able to speak at all; but he just stood there and looked pale. If Peut had run away, or if he had used up more plates, Karool would have been relieved; but Peut simply said: "Hello, Uncle!" and crept under the cloth. Suddenly, while he stood bent forward, Uncle gave him such a furious kick that he was lifted off the ground and uttered a short groan. Then they flew at each other and soon lay on the paving stones, fighting; but not for long. Peut soon sat on top and beat the poor giant wherever he could get him. Karool remained lying with some blood in his graying hair; when he saw the young bandit kick his camera to pieces, he began to howl loudly. It was not exactly howling; it sounded much more final, almost like a donkey, far gone in years, that can no longer bray, if you have ever heard that. Then the people came running; the women cried: "Oh, poor man! You ugly bandit, standing there!" Jefke, the shoemaker, an irritable man, began to speak, but he was too angry to do it well. He made some gestures toward Peut, who stood there panting and pulling up his trousers, and toward Karool. "You . . .," said Jefke. "Your uncle . . .," and Peut got a slap in the face. "What, who do you think you are?" said Jefke. The second eldest of Wannes van Zaelens' boys suddenly pushed through the crowd, crying: "Get away!" and rushed at Peut, caught him by the throat, ran with him to the church and bashed his head against the wall about twenty times. And, oh wonder! Peut let him, and the people shouted: "Give it him hot!" One of them said: "He's lucky that I haven't drunk five or six pints. I would have given him his portion; but, so sober, I can't do it—hit a man!"

Jefke, the shoemaker, pulled Karool up. The latter sat crouching before his camera. Tears ran down his face. The people turned away a little; it touched them, and they shook their heads at one another, full of compassion. "That camera, you'll pay, you bandit. Did you hear what I said or did you not hear it?" said Jefke, and came closer for he felt like giving him another good punch. Then Peut put his hands into his trouser pockets, turned round and walked away. The hostility of the village was upon him. "You've seen the last of me," he thought.

He tramped into the fields, kicking out turnips from pure mischief. Then he walked along the edge of the brook. Somewhere there was a net stretched; he cut it loose and into pieces. Then he went on to the water-mill in another village; along little copses and rows of alders. Toward evening he was back at the

little bridge. Two girls were coming along; they were learning to sew in the village and in the evenings were always afraid to go home. Peut turned up his collar, pulled his cap over his eyes and quickly crossed the road toward them. They began to run. He ran too, made his voice deep and swore. Then they began to scream. From both sides of the field some people whistled on their fingers and shouted: "Hé!" Peut sat down and grinned. Strange and frightful things were going on in him. He looked at his hands. Supposing he killed someone here and buried him in the bed of the brook! After that he heard an old pigeon fancier say: "If such a boy got his learning, he could easily become a schoolmaster. With such a handwriting; so quick in the uptake; and capable! Yes, by God, schoolmaster and more."

Peut again wandered along the bank of the brook; everything smelt so wild. Suddenly he stood in front of the new forester who shot out from behind a tree. It was a Fleming; he let Peut walk along with him and boasted that the fellows would henceforth have to look out. "You saw how I suddenly stood in front of you. And I don't hesitate to climb into a tree; I see where the little lights dance, and then I am there in a jiffy. 'Halt! Who goes there?' " Peut looked askance at his double-barrelled gun. If that Flemish braggart would unload it once. . . . "Shoot something," said Peut. The other immediately showed him his gun. "Do you know anything about it?" he asked. "That is a gun, young man." Peut aimed at the sky, at a tree, then at his forehead. "If you got one like that on your star," he said, but the other caught hold of the barrel and took the gun out of his hands. Peut sat down; his legs were trembling. "What things come into one's head!"

It became dark. The forester told him where he had formerly served. Peut lit a cigarette and said: "I should have become a schoolmaster."

For more than two weeks he roamed goodness knows where and came home only occasionally. Trien wept with joy when she saw him and threw a big piece of beef into the saucepan. He looked unkempt. Someone came into the pub and called and whistled to make someone come forward. Peut jumped up, ready to run. Gust and Pol looked at him. What did he have on his conscience?

Peut walked along the vicarage garden. He fiddled a little at the gate, to see whether it was locked and how one opened it. "Turn the knob well and lift a little," called the priest. He was a new one, too. Peut had not seen him sitting there, and he now had to enter. "What brings you here, boy?" asked the priest. Peut

stood there smiling suspiciously; he had just come to have a look. "Do you want a pear?" They walked together to a pear tree, full of juicy fruits, each picked one and stood eating. The priest was a peculiar man; he said almost nothing and tucked in heartily. "Just look at those thrushes in that mountain-ash, sir!" "Shall we shoot them down?" Then they went to another tree and ate more pears. The priest said: "You did not get so many as I." "Yes, I believe it," said Peut, "not so many, but twice as many." They went to another tree, stood eating and did not say much. The whole yard lay full of sun; the abundant fruit hung ripening and some of it was already dropping. Here it was quiet, the afternoon passed, and Peut said that he had had enough. "I am going to sit in my room. Will you come along too?" "But, sir," said Peut rather touched, "what can I do there?" The priest looked at him quietly and half surprised. "Sit in an armchair and smoke."

Peut sat in a low, soft chair with a cigar in his mouth. The ashtray stood near him. The priest acted as if Peut had always sat there. He wrote some letters; occasionally he said something to answer a question: where he bought his cigars, and how one could get at those goldfish. Then said Peut: "Sir, I am not so bad," and the priest said: "I did not say you were." "Then why did you ask me to come to your room?" "What a question!" said the priest quietly. "You are sitting comfortably, you are smoking a cigar; isn't that enough?" Peut was filled with astonishment and a strange happiness. His badness went far from him and he became enthusiastic. "Sir," said Peut, "you are a good man. You are a real priest." The priest continued to write his letter. "Don't drivel, boy." "I mean it," said Peut and sat up straight. "You are a good man, an honest man. You see, only I can't say it—I'll howl in a minute." He laughed, but the tears were already there. Then he began to speak of learning; that it was so pleasant if one understood everything; he boasted a little of his own easy intelligence. "If I have seen a thing once, I remember it. A tune, too. I hear it sung once, and that is enough. On my way home I realize that I know it and at home I play it on my bugle. And writing, nobody can beat me at that; with a pencil, with a pen, on the board, it makes no difference. And something for which I also have a talent—that is, painting. I have painted the whole of our house, inside and out. And the tiles you see lying on it, as if they were real!" The priest looked at him sitting there, short, squat, with a strand of hair in his eyes, a body full of power. "Would you like a book?" "Sir, I didn't dare ask, because you would perhaps give me something that you would not like to lose." The

priest looked at him and said: "You are also a good man." And Peut felt as if he were being slapped in the face from all sides and that something was being done to his heart with a sharp knife. He could not say anything, blushed, coughed, laughed; everything hurt him inside. He wanted to say: "No, I am bad, I am a bandit," but he could not, and at last he got out something: "Now you are driveling, too." Then they both laughed, the priest and Peut. "Take another cigar—and what book shall it be?" "It must not be a book in which they tell a story; that wouldn't help me; if I had to read that often, I would go crazy; that would play round in my head. But a book from which one can learn something about the sciences. Something simple and stiff, to which one must give all one's attention. I want to study the book seriously. You see, sir, a schoolmaster! If I could only become that!"

In the middle of his studies Peut went to school, laughed a little foolishly at the headmaster, felt embarrassed, scratched his head, hitched up his trousers. It was not so easy. He would have to get permission from home, and for the least fault he would be expelled for good.

Peut went to school, a chap of nineteen years among all those younger fellows. Some courses he attended; for the rest he got lessons and worked separately. In the playground he felt tall and responsible; sent the fighters each into a corner, and "Don't come out or you'll get a beating from me!" He would occasionally take off his clogs and run across the playground on his hands, silently admired by all. A whole heel stuck through his stocking. Once a boy ran away; Peut caught up with him and brought him back to the master. Eagerness made him close his eyes to the fact that the master himself was sometimes wrong. But when they ceased to care for him in the village, when the novelty had worn off for the youngsters and for himself, he would have loved to play a prank occasionally, too. And one day Jefken Spiessens innocently got a beating with the ruler; Fiekens Fons had done it. Peut said: "Master, that boy hasn't done anything wrong." He did not give it up. He stepped out of the form and stood in front of the master. "Don't you hit that child any more." So he was expelled.

Every Thursday they had a free afternoon. Every time the master went to the house of his wife's parents, a little farm. He put into a basket the potato peelings of the whole week, and at the farm the basket was filled with carrots and beans, etc. He always returned at the same hour, except the one time when Peut suddenly stood in front of him in the half dark, saying: "At school you are master, but here we are equals." "Petrus," said the

master, "get out of my way." "I'll give you 'Petrus,' " yelled Peut.

The next day the master stood in the classroom with a black eye and a short, deep scratch on his forehead. Nothing else could be seen on him, and the boys wished him joy of what he had got. For thirty years he had beaten children and had never got a single smack for it himself. One of the De Bondt boys behind his back threw a marble at his head. Then the master turned round, stood still, and said: "Go on, De Bondt, throw it, boy"; and went on to say that he had worked thirty-two years for the parish; their fathers had all sat on these forms in front of him; from his school had gone out four priests, one missionary, one Franciscan monk, one high official at a ministry, three teachers, four winners of the first prize at the competition of the diocese. "I wanted to help another along, that big one who still sat on this form last Monday. From the far Congo I get every year a New Year's letter from my beloved former pupil, the Reverend Father Antoon De Scheppe, missionary of Scheut. 'Master,' he writes, 'I thank you for the good example you have given me. Master, I have been teaching at a school here for one year and I already know what it means, and you, master, have been at it for thirty-two years now.' I have contracted rheumatism here. Perhaps a hundred nights out of the three hundred and sixty-five in the year I can close an eye at night. And now that I can no longer defend myself, I am attacked in the dark. Yes, now I get my thanks. Here, De Bondt, here is your marble, boy."

They all sat still; the master had never before spoken like that. At last a boy asked whether he should shut the window. "Why?" "Because there is perhaps a draught for you, master." The master looked at him. That, too, had not happened in thirty-two years, and just as if to excuse himself, he laughed strangely and showed his hands, the fingers of which he could no longer open. "Rheumatism. Yes, when you get old. It is age." He fumbled with his stiff hands; no, they could no longer open. One couldn't see if he was smiling or wincing; nor whether it was with grief or pain.

Peut could not save himself so well. He no longer cared, if only he could return the book. He waited till the priest rode out on his bicycle, and went and laid the little package in front of the door of the room. He put a little note in it: Many thanks, Petrus Biezemans. But suddenly the priest returned. "Will you mend my puncture, boy?" Peut mended the puncture. After that he had to go in with the priest and fetch a cigar, and again he was allowed to sit down, just as if he had not knocked down the master, as if there were no evil in him. But he didn't want to go

and sit down, and right inside him he cursed himself. The priest did not hold him back; it seemed all the same to him whether one came or went; it is all right with him if one does what one likes. Peut left.

He stood outside and felt relieved. For weeks he was not seen. It appeared that he was staying in a remote hamlet, a little group of houses in the middle of the woods and meadows. Chicken thieves and suspicious hawkers lived there. The village asked: "Where is that Peut? He has knocked down the master, but he deserved a drubbing. Where is Peut?" "In the meadows," others said.

When Biezemans was asked, he replied that he did not know, "But he can't be suffering from hunger, for then he would have returned." Karool wished tha-tha-that he would remain away. Trien wiped her watery eyes. What anxiety she has already had in the matter! But that example did the children no good. Gust kept at his mother till he got a racing bicycle; then he sat on the wheel the whole day; in the summer he began to take part in the races at the fair, was in the forefront in winning prizes and wanted to become a professional racer. One fine day, Pol, with a collar on, was seen walking to catch the eight-o'clock trolley. In the evening he came back. In this way the work at Biezemans' was left to the three adults; the younger ones tried to pick up a livelihood without work. It is not stupid, but nowadays it rarely succeeds.

Some people saw Peut set a trap in the fields, but, "Just wait, he won't catch his tenth hare, for the new forester soon catches thieves by the scruff of their necks." Another said: "Peut is away again; so many chickens are being stolen just now." A little later there was a rumor that the gendarmes were looking for him. People have to have something to talk about.

It must all have been talk, for on the Sunday of the fair on October 1st, when everybody was talking about him, there was Peut with a sweetheart. It was an ugly little thing with a wide, bloodless mouth, red eyes, and blue veins at her temple. She hung onto his arm and let her head lean blissfully against him. He went and sat in the swing with her and whirled so high that the little boat stood almost erect at either end, but she did not utter a cry. She was from the meadows and accustomed to more. Then he stood at a booth for dolls and toys, aiming boisterously, while she looked at something else. He gave her the four paper roses with two silver leaves which he had won, bought a lottery ticket for fifty centimes, won with the ace of diamonds and chose a

silver necklace with a golden horse's head in a ring for her. She put it on, and they went home. Karool was standing leaning against the wall outside, staring at the sky, and he let them pass in front of him beneath his glance. While they were coming in, Biezemans left. "Hello, mother!" and Trien answered indifferently, "Peutrus." The girl said nothing.

There sat Mie, his eldest sister; she had also got a man at last, a coarse, rough workman who was silent and looked just-home-from-work and always asked gruffly, "What is it?" when Mie spoke to him. They were on the point of getting married. Mie was artful no more; she went to sit by the girl: How old she was? Not yet fifteen; that she was so thin, and had our Peutrus lost his head? Meanwhile Peutrus sat alone in the kitchen eating; after that he went back to the meadows with the girl.

That afternoon the village was still sniggering; that evening in the dance hall there was already a scandal. The girl's brother took his sister by the arm, pulled her outdoors, and, "Go home or I'll kick you there." It was a tall stalwart fellow, the only serious one from the meadows who had ever made his way. He had been living in the village for two years and was married; he was a poulterer and was getting on well. Peut stood behind him and asked him what he intended to do. Lewie answered that he had nothing to do with him, but as soon as his sister was round the corner over there, on her way home, he would like to have a talk with him. For a little while it looked as if they would fight, and then Peut decided: "Wiske, go home." She went. Then said Lewie: "If you want to fight, begin; if you want to talk, come home with me."

Peut talked. "Lewie, you don't understand me. With what I am doing, I have a purpose."

"You begin wtih grand words, boy. Talk simply."

"Lewie, you don't understand me. You are mistaken; I know what I am doing. I am protecting your sister. You mustn't laugh before you know everything. You are a serious boy, I want to talk to you; I shall open my heart."

"You mustn't talk so grandly, I say; where did you pick up those words, or are you perhaps already drunk?"

Peut explained his purpose. He wanted to take her away from over there in the meadows; it was time. As surely as there is a God, he hadn't touched her, not yet kissed her. He gave her a box on the ears because she did not want to go with him. He was a thief, he had stolen, but he was well posted on the matter over there, and knew what there is to it: "Well, Lewie, it has

done something to me; I am going to become serious. She must get away from there and I'll look after her."

Lewie says that that is his business; he will provide for his sister himself. A great magnanimity makes Peut tender. He has only done it for her good. "I have a soft heart, Lewie, but now it is all right, if you will look after your sister, I'll keep off."

They went off together to play cards. People laughed and did not understand. Lewie and Peut parted at midnight, both a little talkative after the beer. Peut boasted of his good heart, which always held him back; otherwise he would have become a great bandit. It suddenly overwhelmed him, and he then ran and shouted and didn't know what to do with himself. Lewie said: "I didn't know that you had such good stuff in you. You must now improve your position; why don't you begin a poultry business?"

Yes, poultry business! The next day Victor Kiek came running to Biezemans, a poulterer who had grown rich and now lived in a villa with a big nursery garden. "Where is the thief? By God, this time he shall have the gendarmes to contend with; it is the second time, thirty chickens; the thief, the loafer!" Biezemans himself turned pale; there you had it; a thief! "Go in, he's still in bed. Do him in, then I needn't do it myself." He went and harnessed his horse, put his little girl on the cart, rode away and did not speak to anyone.

In the afternoon the chief constable and a gendarme found only Wiske at home in the meadows. They wanted to take her along to prison, but she began to scream and confessed everything. She knew nothing about it; over there in the wood were the chickens in a basket, and Father and Peut had talked about it, but Peut told her that he had not done it. The two men of the law met Biezemans and his wife and only inquired when Peut had come home after playing cards at the pub until twelve o'clock. Biezemans said, "At four o'clock, gentlemen." Trien said that it wasn't anything like as late as that; she had lain awake and, "What do you know about it, you were asleep?"

Peut had certainly gone to bed at twelve o'clock, but to Biezemans it was clear that he had stolen, so he would have to take his punishment. He said to Trien, "You would still take the bandit's part," and persisted that it was four o'clock; he had lain awake. The constable was a severe man with a thick mustache. He had once in another village at night shot down a Walloon clerk who did not understand what he wanted with his, "Who's there?" Three times, "Who's there?" and that Walloon did not

understand. Bang! and he was struck, stone dead. Since then the constable had walked with his head down, a lenient man who spoke softly behind his mustache, but inexorable as to the law.

When they came out, Peut was standing on the steps on the other side. The two men walked toward him with their bicycles. Peut also began to walk, looking round to see how far he remained ahead. They jumped on their bicycles, and Peut began to run, but they caught up with him immediately, and Peut jumped into a house. But he went wrong, and instead of running into the fields through a back door, he stayed in a small room from which he could not get out. The gendarme was behind him; Peut hit him on the head with a piece of wood. The constable went quietly outside, pulled a heavy piece of wood out of the pile, stood in the doorway and commanded Petrus Biezemans, in the name of the law, to surrender. He closed the door; and then the fight began. Neither of them could swing their weapons properly; the place was too small; they smashed the lamp and everything that stood on the cupboard. That went on for a while, till the constable, himself grown furious, shouted, "Surrender!" and felled Peut with a last blow. The gendarme tied his legs together and clapped handcuffs on him; a peasant had to harness his horse, and Peut came to again as they were putting him on the cart.

That is how he was driven through the village. His hair was wild and tangled; his left sleeve half torn off; his shirt open in front; blood ran down his face; the cutting handcuffs made him wince. That is how he rode out on Monday of the October Fair. The people stood shuddering. Never will the little chaps that saw him forget it, if they live to be a hundred. So he drove past his home. Biezemans and Karool did not even come out to see him. His mother, brother and sisters stood on the steps, crying, and Trien ran to the constable with a package in a kerchief: "Please take it along; some clothes and food for my boy, sir." And "Goodbye, Peutrus, goodbye, Peutrus!" She went and stood with her face to the wall, crying. The constable hung the package onto the handlebars of his bicycle and walked behind the cart with his head bowed.

Soon after that the trial took place. Peut was acquitted, because he had not committed the theft, but for resisting the police he got eighteen months. He served them at Vorst.

Little Martha fell ill. The people said: "Always on that cart; she has contracted something." And indeed she had had a dry

cough for a long time which it hurt one to hear. It did not last long with the child; in the spring she died. For two hours on end Biezemans ran through the house, crying, "Oh! Oh!" with his two fists at his temples. Then came a letter from Peutrus, in beautiful handwriting, sixteen large pages, and everybody said that it was particularly well composed. Everyone was allowed to read it; one did Trien a favor if one asked to see it.

"Vorst, the. . . . Beloved parents, sister and brothers, I have just heard of the grievous loss that has come upon us all in the sad passing of our beloved daughter and youngest sister Martha. In my lonely cell, where never a ray of sun enters, I sank weeping to my knees and my tears mingled with a fervent prayer that welled to my lips and rose to the high heaven. Our beloved Martha, our darling, is no more! She has gone from us, snatched away from our love, like a delicate flower, crushed under the foot of the passer-by in the field."

After that he began to describe her life; how, as the youngest, she had always been the darling and joy of the family. Here he occasionally lapsed from the high-sounding phrases to tell, simply and vividly, some nice stories from the life of little Martha. "Do you remember, it was in the winter and there were many people in the pub, and Broeckers Jan was also there; he loves children so much and he was always concerned about our Martha. And Jan, etc. . . ." Then he became solemn again, and described, falsely and sentimentally, how the child died.

"Beloved parents, sister and brothers . . ." Oh, could he only be with them in this hour of trial! His heart melted with homesickness. "Mother dear, please come and visit me some day; after all, I am your son; or don't you want anything more to do with me? Am I deserted by everyone on earth?" Where could he find the words of consolation, like sweet balsam for their wounds? "But take courage; your child is in heaven."

While doing clerical work and glueing bags in the prison, he thought without interruption from morning till night about the course of life. They won't hear of his saying that he is innocent; no, certainly not; he is surely guilty and he sheds hot tears over it. He thinks of his beloved school fellows; he thinks of his sollemn first Holy Communion. "How are all the boys? Please write me a word about them. Doubtless most of them are married and enjoy the happiness of fatherhood at their own hearths." And when he thinks that he too could sit at home at this moment with a modest, tender wife, and that there could already be a

little child in the house, beloved parents, sister, brothers, his courage fails him completely. And then he asks himself: Why? and how? He will spare them all the painful memory; in short, now he is sighing in jail, he who could learn so easily and could surely have got ahead and earned a white-collar living.

He sat there as a result of a mistake, for the court had proved that he was not guilty of the theft. His blunder had been not wanting to let himself be seized, being guiltless, and when he was in that little room at Treze's and could not get away, he became like a raging devil and fought for dear life. However, as the Reverend Father Almoner said to him only the day before, he did not consider everything as lost. On the contrary, in eleven months and seventeen days, upon leaving this gloomy prison, a new course of life would begin for him. He was bearing his long punishment with patience and begged the same of them, till at last the hour of his release came and he returned to the bosom of his family as a new man, a worthy son, a good brother. Meantime he was learning and studying as much as possible like a real student; he was also learning French in order to acquire more and more capability which a man needed so much in life, and in order to become something. As he ended, hot tears of repentance and grief fell upon his paper; he implored them on his knees for forgiveness for the disgrace he had brought upon the family, and he promised them solemnly to return one day as "Your loving son and brother, Petrus Biezemans."

Even the masters were speechless at the letter and the priest said to Trien: "Your son is a gifted boy; he has much talent." Then Trien laughed through her tears and said that he had always had it in him; that one could tell from everything; that he knew about everything and immediately understood everything. But he had always been such a smart one and he got these occasional attacks, and then she saw well that he could not get on with himself. And what came out then was often astonishing. She said: "On Sunday, so God will, I'll go there once," and she wept. Every month there came a letter like that, more correct each time, with practically no mistakes, with strange ideas and vehement feelings. "If ever there is a letter for me, I tear it open, and if it comes from home, I could pull the prison down with pleasure." And so on. He described his day, explained his plans, but gradually began to write more things that they didn't understand at Biezemans'. He suddenly began to talk of social problems, justice, order, the encyclical Rerum Novarum, and

that such principles were the most important things in life. The two masters read the letters at Biezemans', over a pint, and they talked it over between themselves. Then one of them said loudly, so that the whole pub heard it, that one could feel that Peutrus was studying hard and that he was occupied above all with social problems. Thus he used the same words as Peut, and the people understood no better.

Peut came back. He looked a little paler and was a little stouter. He seemed quite a different fellow. He let his hair grow in a brush and had become contemplative; no longer anything like as wild and boisterous. He talked much on summer evenings in the little groups that sat crouching on the threshold and the steps, and astonished everyone with his knowledge. It mostly came round to the problem of society. "History teaches that there are various systems by which to solve it, but what we know for certain is that there is only one truth. Jef, you are sitting there or you are not sitting there; but you cannot at the same moment sit and not sit there. One or the other. There is only one truth. And with justice it is exactly the same thing. Let us suppose I must pay you five francs; four is too little and six is too much; it must be exactly five francs. That proves that there is only one justice. Just is just, and if it is not just, it is unjust."

But that too lost its novelty; he was told once that he was a liberal or a socialist, one of the two, but certainly not a Catholic. The village life, the work without uplift, the freedom and his own strange nature, all began to torment and irritate him, and it made him writhe that nothing came of all his plans and dreams except virtuousness, which tortured him like a straitjacket.

Suddenly the affair with Wiske, who now lived at Lewie's in the village itself, began again. The child was not yet seventeen, still ugly, quiet and stupid; what Peut saw in her, God only knew. But Lewie would have none of it, and at Biezemans' they were also against it; and again his work suffered. Trien tried to reduce his pocket money; Karool put in a word; Lewie boxed Wiske's ears; it was no joke. One evening Peut came home, sat down, and nobody spoke to him. Biezemans took out of his pocket a letter that Peut had written from the prison and read aloud about the solemn promise, a new course of life, to return to the bosom of his family, a new man, a worthy son, a good brother. Then he laughed scornfully and went out; Karool said with a deep sigh, "Yes, yes."

In the end there were all kinds of rumors, and "Where did the money come from to go to the fairs and to give Wiske a gold

bracelet as a present?" Lewie found out where it came from, but he told nobody except the constable, and one fine morning they took Wiske away. It was all done quietly and quickly; Lewie had high friends in Brussels. If he was served a police warrant for driving without a light or on the wrong side, nothing ever came of it. But he didn't mind delivering a couple of chickens; one good turn deserved another. And so Lewie knew what he was doing; he played safe with his sister; it was for her good.

The raging devil again entered Peut; there was no getting on with him; he did wrong for wrong's sake. Suddenly Karool packed his things and said that he had been accepted at the charitable institution at Mechelen. Two weeks later the armory men saw from the train that he had become ferryman. For ten centimes per head he ferried the people across the canal. It was a small raft that he shoved along by a chain that was stretched across the canal. "How much does it cost?" "Te-te-ten centimes."

Before the trial came on Peut went to have a row with Lewie. Plates for a meal were just on the table. With one arm he swept everything onto the floor, and he threw the full soup tureen through the window. Lewie flew at him. Peut managed to escape. He ran straight to the trolley, rode to Brussels and rang at the house of the juvenile judge who wanted to send Wiske to a reformatory.

Mr. Judge, he had not much to tell him; the day after tomorrow the trial of Louisa Teugels would come up. That was his sweetheart. He had come to ask him whether he intended to break up his life by sending that girl to an institution till her twenty-first year. The juvenile judge was a gray man in his fifties with cold steely eyes. He shrugged his shoulders: "My dear man, what is all this talk? Aren't you well?" and he pointed to his forehead. Then Peut began to bang on the table and to shout that one life was as good as another, "My happiness is as good as yours; who do you think you are? Don't look at me like that or I'll jump over the table and on to your head. And the day after tomorrow I'll be at the Court of Justice, and if you dare send her away, you will be dead before you leave the court. Let this be a warning to you! Oh, you probably think that the poor will continue to bow before you, that you can go on doing with us what you like. I repeat, you will be dead if you dare to send her away."

Peut traveled back. At Grimbergen, when changing trolleys, two gendarmes already had hold of him, struggled for a moment and clapped handcuffs on him. With that telephone nowadays

one can no longer think of running away. Jump into the train in Brussels; they telephone, and at Antwerp the police stands waiting for you when the train arrives.

No more was heard of Peut.

Years went by; time passes quickly. Biezemans died. Trien died; when the time comes, one is called and has to go. Gust and Pol married into other villages. Of the Biezemans only Mie remained, and she said: "Our Peut, God knows where he is."

Wiske came back; she could sew; she married a workman and it became a household like any other.

Lewie maintained: "As long as the juvenile judge is alive, we shall not see Peut." Once it was said that Peut had studied himself crazy in the prison. "One could hear that already when he spoke with all those grand words here; what was all that leading to?" And that they had transferred him to the lunatic asylum at Doornik. For a time it was said that he had tried to escape and had already swum to the other side, when the guard found out, shot him twice in the back, and he sank like a stone.

So people tell all kinds of things. My idea is that we don't know the ins and outs of it. I am certainly in two minds about the course of life, and, after all, I read such a lot of books.

Translated by Jo MAYO

Maurice Roelants

THE JAZZ PLAYER

Novelette with one person and seven instruments, being a complete battery of percussion instruments.

Yes, certainly, sir, rather great tragedies are enacted in the secrecy of the heart. Who will write for me the novel of one heart, the novel of one person?

J. Schrey.

COME, COME; GENERALLY WE LACK THE TIME. LIFE IS A FLIGHT INTO work, into a vulgar and unproductive occupation which finally leaves us with some paltry pension to be administered, a flight into a few social duties, the reception of a few acquaintances,

who are tired of the dishes from their own larder and who follow a heart which no longer dares to know its wishes.

But be still. Here is the sea. Two weeks' vacation. We shall dare the great adventure: not move, but throw ourselves head over heels into a silence in which we hear the secret voices of our longings.

We planted our feet on the dune sand. There was a sweet sinking feeling, a slight dizziness, as when your mouth for the first time touched the cheek of a girl.

Between two rugged dune crests the sea folded licking flames of sun and oil on sheets of shallow water.

Not from the slow-moving crests of the waves—but from the murmuring pits of our secret beings, sirens suddenly sprang up. A breeze, a salty tang passed lightly over our lips—but this did not give that taste of unexplored distances, of earth and grass, which touched our tongue with a strange delight.

We stood like conch shells filled with a loud murmur in which sounded the grating beat of the waters, the rustling of fine gravel along the dune shrubs and a distant droning buoy that shouted its echoes over our heads in hollowed-out sand basins. But did not all that bluster come from us, mingled with the processional jubilation of the awakened sirens?

"The sea, the sea, the sea," I said to my wife, my voice low and quivering and with all the symptoms of suppressed emotion.

She did not answer. She was carrying our little two-year-old son on her arm. But she leaned with her shoulder against me. Immediately there flowed between us a current of warmth, easily penetrating our clothes. We soon glowed together, with the same glow as when we were first engaged ten years before. Only that her one shoulder was weighed down heavily and wearily by our boy. I took him from her and, each foot sinking in deep, quickly climbed to the top of the dune. There, breathless, I raised my son above my head and turned him gradually, facing the entire horizon, as a rapt dedication to the wide world, to that line between cloud and water yonder; there the train of smoke of motionless ships, here the land with slanting trees and in that corner, a cluster of houses belonging to a town sunk in mists.

Beneath us in the dunes, my wife lay back and laughed so that the sand vibrated like metal. I rushed down. Our little boy among the grass stalks, our lips met. Our eyes closed. In us was a great and wonderful rhythm. On the one side the sea quietly lapping the shore. On the other, a mighty breath heaved onto the land. Earth and sea balanced in this kiss. Our hearts thumped

as if they would spring out of the slow measure that rocked the whole world with its oscillating beat.

Somewhere this strange happiness touched a still stranger pain, a restlessness—a realm where contradictory forces wrestled with each other, where there was stamping and fighting. No, no, we didn't want to lose this heavenly freedom, we wanted to continue this ascent, this elevation from the rut and from mediocrity. Were the little daily miseries already after us? Fight, fight.

Like young lovers we threw ourselves upon each other. Was this still play? Her shoulders writhed with delightful effort in my hands, in which she twisted like a swift animal. Her entwining arms round my loins clutched me as in a too tender embrace. With my muscles and sinews tense, all cords, I leaned against her; my back thrilled at her all too sweet softness. I turned in the small strength of her grasp. At first, when I overpowered her, she laughed. I don't know whether her laughter and her breath on my lips whipped up or tormented the voluptuous tenseness of my being, but I pressed her so hard against my breast that she creaked like an apple and uttered a sharp yell. I let her go, a little annoyed because my great happiness and animation could not fight it out to the end with an equally strong force. Her weakness had vanquished my violence.

And then, our little boy cried. In the sand his mouth had become a little snout of white emery-paper.

No, I am no poet. I am a manufacturer of furniture. Year in, year out a yearning smoulders in my heart. The fabrication of furniture takes up nearly all my time but does not wear away the mysterious wheels that have been rotating fast and noiselessly in my mind and in my soul ever since my earliest youth. Am I an exception? Can it be that others concentrate their entire personality, their entire play of feelings and thoughts on their business? In my case it is different. I have, so to say, no difficulties, no incidents, no setbacks, except outside my trade. I love my wife and my boy. I hate a half surrender with all the force of my being. Every day I pray to the Lord to let me keep the certainty that I shall die on her faithful heart and that my son will grow out of our united love.

And yet, alarming realization, the sober husband and father who keeps the manufacture of furniture in action in such an exemplary manner, has not killed the young man, particularly the youth, in me, the man. It is perhaps natural that the passions continue to burn and ferment in the heart of the socially

domesticated. And yet, can I call passion the youth's purity, his first admiration for life, his expectation of great things, that melting tenderness for a young girl's eyes, that mixture of Platonic dream and first puberty?

But before declaring my trade to be that of manufacturer of furniture, I have often to state that it is that of a tormented human being. For, deep within me, a reasonable and orderly man, I am doing violence to a youth who has always remained sixteen. I am going on to forty-five, and day by day the cleft that separates me from this youth is getting wider. Naturally—or perhaps not naturally. Daily I am getting more ludicrous because I cannot part from this boy I once was and shall always remain. The time will come when I shall be a sixteen-year-old lad with a bald head, a back like a tunnel and a stout walking-stick. I shall look just like those little old men who secretly and sadistically enjoy looking at young girls, but I hope that the pureness of my insight can then be reconciled with my pride, which guides me and prevents me from having to blush before my wife and son.

For I suffer from the joy that the youth secretly gives me. I fight against this young chap who has been leading me, a maturing man, by the nose for twenty-five years. It is he who threw me into the arms of my wife. I praise him and am grateful to him for it. But whatever he may do now, he shall not tear me away from her. What does he whisper in my ear? That I have become bourgeois and am withering with my love and fidelity. That I am despite everything a young poet. No, no, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am a manufacturer of furniture, I am . . ., I am . . ., I am. . . .

Yes, certainly I was always punctual when I was sixteen years old and about to meet a girl. Irene, your mouth is large and the curl of your lips in the corners that expose your far too numerous teeth—Irene, you have a hundred teeth—makes you look like a savage. You are as yellow and brown as those dirty Italians who let go of the handles of their barrel-organs in order to rattle their tin mug. And the white of your eyes gleams blue, their pupils flame, shining darkly like polished chestnuts.

Irene, yes, we are walking along the Leie. We are walking away from the town, which lies behind us in the Saturday afternoon. Bullets crack behind the banks of the rifle range. An oarsman in a red- and white-striped sweater passes on a skiff, sculling

rhythmically. The fields open out. Irene, our arms rest crosswise behind our backs. On each side a modest hand lies quietly on a pliant, heaving waist. Irene, behind your ear and under your hair two chaste lips seek the warmth of your neck. And you walk right on, without turning away or fearing.

Between the first sweetness of the senses and untouched purity a world of youthful bliss is balanced on a gossamer. What are we saying? Irene, you have a beautiful voice. Irene, look how that heap of washed carrots lies reflected in the Leie? Irene, how quickly the afternoon is passing! And then, do we feel anything? A wind that, with the scent of grass and clover, and fresh and dewy, has just touched the water, betrays to us the warmth of our cheeks. Where are we going, what do we expect? Around us the meadows loom. We follow the windings of the river. We are afraid that the evening will set in too early and with all our fear hasten its rapid ascent into pollard willows and shrubs. The sky, the clouds, a starling. . . . What is the use of it all? Two eyes subdue their lustre and light, two eyelids quiver and close, a tear flows from between black lashes, a forehead buries itself on a shoulder.

Irene, what strange shame has come over you? Lift up your head and do not be afraid of these wonderful delights; it is our youth taking its first steps; it is our lips that at first pursing retain the taste of a mouth; it is our first tenderness, which gives and takes; it is our first rapture that takes possession of another dream.

It is the first morning in Paradise. All the gloomy heroism that is necessary to lead a simple, ordinary, social life without erring or greatness is still strange to us. We are still flowering, attached with tough bands to our home and our youth. We have sinewy roots in the light of day, like white water-lilies on large leaves. We know nothing as yet of the fatal drifting, the high waters that will soon carry us off. Whither? Whither?

Irene, and you, Clara, and you, Yvonne, and little Anne, you manifold faces of my youth—here I am again. Through you I am always rejuvenated. Through you I always drink again the water of the springs. Through you I always strengthen myself again to remain faithful to the only chosen one, to the mother of my son, not to betray the prosperous manufacturer of furniture, that everyday man, that adversary who has renounced the thousand passions and disturbances of life. You all love me, I love you all. I have chosen you all in my wife. You are all in the one chosen one.

If she would only change, if she would only take on all your faces. But no, she remains herself. I know, through and through, the pleasing smoothness of her skin, all her gestures, all the impulses in her heart, all the workings of her mind. She is as I love her. She tires me. She deadens something in me. She weighs me down. I can't stand her any more. We must fight with one another; bite one another.

Irene, and Clara, and little Anne, and Yvonne, lay me again quietly with my cheek on her breast as on a warm peach. There alone I am well off. There alone I find rest and salvation. There I am every day the prodigal son who returns from the pigsty of the furniture manufacture.

But let me determine still better the positions in this small drama in which I am the only actor—this solo drama, if you like. The Lord has put in me a tragic dose of reasonableness and fantasy and over and beyond that an honesty which I can perhaps betray but to which I always want to return. There are men who are destined to unfold themselves completely as poets, as leaders of peoples and revolutionaries, as benefactors of humanity, as saints. I was marked by nature as young Ariel, as a lad who possessed the highest power of his soul when leading a girl before she became a woman. For Ariel is the poet in me, the general, the revolutionary—my greatness and glory and strength.

But I have also been marked by nature to make Ariel die in me, to deprive myself of this heavenly enjoyment, to part with this enchanting power and inspiration—which incidentally makes more desperate gestures from day to day. And it is my reasonableness to be on the side of the Lord, to accept my role of father and husband from the 15th of July of one year to the 1st of July of the following year with its hiding away in orderly work. And daily I stand at a sharpening wheel which grinds out my soul, my imagination and my sensitiveness. How I love you, my wife and my son. For your sake I cut to pieces within me the heart of Ariel.

Then when the holidays come round, when the manufacturer of furniture, the man of nearly forty-five, gets two weeks' leave, the old boy raises himself, throws a year of habit, a year of holy, heroic barrenness of the soul away, strengthens his adversary for a new campaign of lustreless prosperity and pumps glorious fresh blood into the mummy until it rises and walks again.

Lord, what is it, what is it this year? Never have I run over to

Ariel with so much heart and soul. I know that I am getting too old to do this without danger. In previous vacations it was enough for me that my wife was also rejuvenated, till she was like a girl. But now? But now? The first approach to the sea, the great liberation from the slavery of the every day, has already whipped me up terribly. I even had a vision in which Ariel with a torch and a red flag—ridiculous, ridiculous—revolted against a hideous bourgeois. He carried the fire to the wood piles of his adversary. He splashed and scratched his polished furniture. And what did this madness and this blasphemy mean? The hand that poured petroleum on the foot of the cross on which a bourgeois by turns exchanged his own face for that of Christ? What else than that Ariel revolted against the Lord also?

For don't let me be cowardly but let me recognize that it is the Lord who stands right at the back impassively watching how I shall draw myself out of this trial. I have already experienced it for years. He denies me a certain greatness in my existence as family father, a certain heroism, if need be, that of setbacks and of poverty, with which I could much more easily and with equal weapons resist the young hero Ariel; who knows, perhaps defeat him. I am not mistaken about this: all heroism means joy, intoxication, voluptuousness, and He summons me to renounce it, He demands of me that I carpenter gloomily on one love in this miserable, flourishing furniture business.

Oh, let me pray! Let me separate by means of my prayer this young heathenish hero and this poor, mature man with tears in his first wrinkles.

I chew words in my mouth like lumps of rubber. Round it flows a juice tasting of mastic and benzine. Pray, merely pray. I end by belching forth the prayer. Before long familiar mysteries beckon temptingly. I surrender. No, I am no longer menaced. There bubbles in me a wild enthusiasm. Shall I still fear? Away, you doubt. I shudder with disturbing, dissolving splendors.

My wife is digging a hole for her boy somewhere in the sand. From the terrace of our cottage I see the beach, the dike, a bandstand, a boat on its side, the small bathing machines and cabins. Large clouds are floating across the sun and over the sea with green patches of molten bronze. In gusts the wind brings the smell of shrimps and wet shells, of seaweed and fish, of salt and meagre dune roses.

There is a girl walking on the asphalt. She is carrying a racket under her arm. She smiles at someone out of awkward serious-

ness. But she does not blush. Then suddenly, she stands still. She lets the whole world come up to her and she laughs.

The whole world, that is, seven girl friends. They walk arm in arm and prattle. The whole horizon full of girls closes in a semicircle round the one girl with the racket. They chatter. All their feet and knees dance, making some Charleston movements.

And I, I too, between the little raffia chairs, let myself go for a moment to the music of an invisible jazz band, of water and wind perhaps. A wonderful bobbing moves my knees rhythmically, my legs kick out sideways, my feet come down softly on the ground that seems elastic and chases a shooting pain quivering through my whole body. Girl with the racket, and you, O all you girls, we are young, young for all time. No one old in years knows how we avow our youth in this Charleston. It is in us, we are in it. This is the rhythm of this time, of our youth.

What was it? What betrayal? Who made this boundless youth suddenly crumble? My heart does not yet fail nor does my breath and, though it is true that I have become corpulent, my belly does not yet hinder me. And it is not the departure of the girls that has left me alone with my forty-four years. Nevertheless, with one blow I am again forty-four, even older, much older, older by all the years that I still have to live. And I sit there with the whole rocking sea in a tear, welled up from a sorrow, a despair, a frenzy, and especially from an unspeakable powerlessness that overwhelms me, I don't know from where, and makes me tremble and shake.

How the love of those who cherish us frequently comes inopportunely. At that moment my wife, back from the beach, laid her hand on my head. It was as if that familiar hand had suddenly crushed together in itself all the weight of the years. Was it shame or annoyance? I could not be honest. I wanted to take her fingers to my lips and explain to my wife how my heart beat and labored in distress. But I was helpless. I had only the strength to ward off her friendly gesture with a ruse. My hair occasionally stands unruly and dry and then hurts me as if at the least touch it would snap off at the root.

"Jo, darling, my hair is again brittle. Take your hand away."

The false tenderness in my words quickly warned and offended her. She pulled her arm back as if she had felt near her the icy flight of a machine-saw. The sea and clouds spun before my eyes, for her glance searched my face. Meanwhile she tormented me with her silence, a silence full of the muffled sound of sand and

water. When she had sufficiently taken me in, sufficiently tested "my mood" in terms of former experiences, she again picked up the sweater that she had put down when she came in, moved a chair before going away—in her case a sign of orderliness, which she always makes when she has something still to say. What would it be? Would she again, out of pity, withdraw unasked from the conflict, suppress all reproaches magnanimously to leave me all the more ineluctably to my inner oscillations? If she would only show annoyance! At the first reproach I would be able to snub her, to rush at her, to raise my hand against her, like a brute that has found a tangible form for all the restlessness and frenzy with which he is being belabored. Who knows how I would love her if I could, once and for all, wreak my torments on her for whom I go through all these ridiculous tortures, if I could thrust from me all this ferocity in one unjust chastisement?

"My friend, you have been sitting around the house too much. In the town. And here again. Walk to the end of the dike. The Heuvelmans are there. Drink a glass of beer with them, at the 'Bass.' And go to the 'Abbaye' this evening; there is dancing there. You need some diversion."

If this poor young woman—she is twenty-eight—had given advice indifferently with the superiority of a wise mother, who starts her children at games, certain that a little distraction will drive away all bad tempers, I might have considered myself offended and behaved rudely. But no, she had spoken with barely concealed emotion. She had quivered with a diffident delicacy, in which there was something like fear, something like a prayer—as if she knew that in this tension a higher peace, a love, a happiness was at stake.

Pity, magnanimity, you are the utmost provocation, the nip of pincers to which one can react only with cowardice. I avenged myself as much as I could, although it hurt me more than to yield to despondency and grief.

Sad refuge into smile and tenderness! I laughed at my wife. She did not answer with a tear of relief—her unrest would not be relieved. Did she foresee that the conflict would not pass so quickly or easily? I held her to my breast. No warmth, no fervent current in our embrace. Only from a distance, in the stereotyped gesture of the kiss, boy friend and girl friend waved encouragingly to one another. "There is no fellowship, no bond. But hope, good hope. Persevere!"

And as if we had talked a long time with one another, we, who

without a word fight the conflicts in our own souls—as if the why had to remain hidden and only the battle plan had importance and significance, I said with feigned levity, "Fiddlesticks! Don't give into whims. (Ariel, Ariel, forgive me this denial, of which I don't believe a word.) We shall go out together this afternoon. Into the dunes with our boy. What have I to do with the Heuvelmans and the 'Abbaye'?"

Will the struggle be easier when placed under the eyes and at the side of my wife? Who will fall in line, my cowardice or courage? But my wife surveyed the difficulties with great care and disbelief. Did she fathom the musty smouldering in my heart more deeply? She shook her head and replied:

"Go out for once. That will be infinitely better."

But Ariel must have incited me to a stubbornness, the consequences of which he foresaw, for it was almost angrily and certainly crossly that I raised my voice in order to speak cuttingly and firmly, as if my mouth were full of reproaches:

"I don't like this pretended self-sacrifice. Don't carry on as if your pleasures didn't count. We are going out together. That's that!"

Poor, good woman. Yet I knew well that she had not thought for a moment of the pose of self-sacrifice and, being well-meaning, only felt pity for my disturbed mind and its brooding. But I overflowed with falseness and treachery and I saw without blushing or repentance that under her self-control her lips were trembling and her eyes suddenly flamed, as she said:

"Do what you like, my friend, you are old and wise enough."

How would I have rejoiced to know that she tormented me, to know that, hypocritically and falsely, she let those innocent words fall, those foul, biting words that laughed caustically into my face: old and wise enough. I, who go to pieces, right into degeneration and destruction because despite my years, my wife, my son, my life—I cannot become old and wise enough. How I would have offended her love with an avowal, a confession out of virtue and pleasure and avenging lust of this man in me, because of which she long ago became an old, wrinkled woman! How I would have mocked her confidence, offended her noblest attachment by letting the girls pass one by one before her imagination who, from my bursting youth, from beside the Leie to here on the beach, have pulled me out of her arms. But no, you are old and wise enough, she had said, with a nervous charitableness that sounded like an exorcism of the dark happen-

ings in my being. And I continued to seethe with rage because I found no wrong in my wife.

Round about noon, while we were at table, a thin, light rain fell outdoors. It brought as it were a little truce in the repulsive conflict within me, which I now tried to direct outwards in futile bickering and then with jealous care thrust back, as inescapable, for later. A little rain, a cool bath, and all that inner scorching will pass, I laughed equivocally to myself, and my eyes examined the sky full of water and sun with childish hope. If it continued to rain, nothing could force me to go out alone, as my wife had wisely recommended, but then I should also not need to execute my senseless plan of a family walk. Hide myself behind the sunny rain: that was all I found to reconcile Ariel and the manufacturer of furniture for a little while and let them sit side by side near a spouse without youth or age, O cowardice, O enjoyable cowardice!

But fortunately, soon after noon the rain was taken from my face. And as if to grant me a last chance of reflection, my wife asked with a sweet reserve that left me absolutely free choice:

"What are you going to do, Herman?"

"Go out together, of course!" I blurted out in an uncontrolled voice, and the certainty suddenly threw me into the inward struggle I feared so much. I began to be excessively active. I myself put our boy into the baby carriage, made him laugh by tickling him, and pushed him, before his mother could get ready, outdoors in front of the cottage. It was probably instinctive that I thrust the father in me into the foreground. Should it be called excessive boasting? But from my son's laugh flowed a great cheerfulness into my heart, as I ran with him along the railings.

I had passed perhaps three or four times by the De Kinkankhoorn house when I noticed on a terrace a young man in grey flannel trousers and yellow sweater. He lay on a deck chair doing nothing. In one of the corners of his mouth I saw a sneer, a superiority over me, which I immediately accepted. I walked a little further—how ugly is a man getting on in years who still strains playfully at a baby carriage—but it was so as not to show at once how ashamed I was. Shame, yes, but also regret, and above all jealousy, a tormenting envy of that young man who possessed his youth.

When at last my wife came up to me I snarled at her as if I could by rage shake off my fatherhood:

"How long you always take! And meanwhile I have to play nursemaid!"

She took over my place at the baby carriage without a word, without a gesture of opposition, as if stubbornly determined to endure everything and certain in advance that my anger and vexation would wear out on her patience.

We walked silently side by side. In the unpaved Poppy Lane that leads to the dunes the wheels sank into the sand. I turned the carriage round and pulled it after me. Offended I dragged unspeakable burdens—the whole betrayed family. I sulked and did not want to look aside at the tennis courts where rackets were just driving the balls and making the asphalt bang with rhythmic rubber bouncing. There was the sound of counting voices, bright flashes through the stormy murmur in my head. I pulled like a blind man, with hot blood in my eyes, up the dune. The wet sand and the bundles of grass beat an odor of sick hares against my face. Having struggled onto the top of the dune, I stood still to pant for breath. A hammering flinging of rackets beat in my heart.

Then it was that on the wind that blew cool along my glowing neck and ears my name was called. Who had called, who down there from the valleys? I recognized all the girls' voices from the tennis courts. It sounded like a last call, a call of despair and at the same time of longing, a chorus of fresh voices: "Are we lost for all time? We are lost, lost for you. Lost our laugh. Lost your youth, your inspiration." And then, from the mouths of a thousand girls, my name, nothing but my first name.

Or did no one really call? What is the use if the heart nevertheless turns over, if the mind is inexorably shocked and life and soul begin to ebb? For in the twinkling of an eye there sprang at me like a cat the thought, the inevitable recognition: "I am a man who is at an end. I am even beyond the end. It was childish audacity still to believe that once over the culminating point of the years one might still return." But not even that, not the impossibility of return, placed this glowing band of suffering round my temples. What is a return? one wonders. But I suddenly knew in great alarm that I had always loved something in the Girl, always longed for something, always worshipped something that was greater than the charming figure I pressed to my bosom and kissed, greater than the woman and the human being. Something, something, something— Lord, what is this hankering in the heart, what is the momentum of the spirit that rises above mortals, that heavenly intoxication, that wonderful power that lifts us above ourselves?

And this call from the mouths of a thousand girls, this call of

sublimity and of the most beautiful moments of my life, gradually sounded like an agonizing reproach: "You are now smaller, you have always been smaller, than you could have been. You possessed nothing but the promise of a possession, a sweet vertigo —give all promise and vertigo back. And continue your fall into a roaring bottomlessness. . . ."

But, oh, that last resistance, that clutching and hitting about one! I stood, turning pale; my abhorred wife began before me to blush with a strange fear on her cheeks. I turned round—there stood, so it seemed to me, a glowing sun ready to dive into the sea, for all order and all bands were broken. All was abandoned: this woman, this boy, this bourgeois prosperity of a manufacturer of furniture. And with a last scornful word to the mother of the child in the baby carriage who had suddenly become illegitimate, absolutely and entirely freed, heroic, I ran down: "You are right, I must get out!"

But at that moment it had the secret meaning of "Adieu, adieu, forever." And I did not turn round.

As in a dream I pursued a way prescribed to me. To the 'Bass.' I drank, one after another, three glasses of mellow Scotch, which made me a little bloated and heavy but did not harm my regained youth and its ecstasies. I saw from underneath a silk lampshade, beneath which electric light glowed, a sunset fit for a picture postcard of the Italian lakes. As evening fell, innumerable girls came strolling along the dike. I got up and started walking among the dear children. At nine o'clock I found myself at the 'Abbaye' in front of a little table with flowers and lamps, next to a shiny dance floor, a few steps from a Negro jazz band. There I would pour out once more my seventeen years as a challenge. How young I was again and in heavenly expectation! A banjo and percussion drum, saxophone and muttering stopped trumpet played rhythmically a wonderfully sentimental dance of pampas and gold fields. Which of these young children, who silently and solemnly caught the rhythms in their hips, in their knees and little feet, would I presently lead along a nocturnal sea that beat with murmuring shells and foam on the firm sandbanks?

But among the couples there suddenly trotted an old gentleman with a young girl. He danced with a wonderful proficiency, ran from girl to girl, after each dance, and guided them with unbearable sureness through the varying measures. I don't know why a crazy hatred for this old dancer overcame me, a feeling

of modesty, perhaps, a recognition of the hopeless ludicrousness and the lies of these old fibres and sinews that still made the gestures of youth. I had ordered champagne. When the waiter placed the ice on my little table, I could not refrain from asking him contemptuously:

"Why don't you throw such old curs off the floor?"

With a short nod he just flicked up the tail of his coat, like a blackbird. Without winking, and most politely and stiffly above his little white tie, he replied:

"Dry wood, sir. Breaks off by itself. I even hope it won't happen here."

Then a fleeting flash of laughing understanding shot into his eyes, whereupon he quickly dropped long lashes. He went away. I sat with a long face before my glass of champagne. I no longer had to decide to refrain from leading away any girl. There suddenly growled in me a pride, a grim pride, a pride without profit or rest, which did not compensate for the sacrifice, nor offer consolation to the victim: Ariel. I really experienced the pains of what is generally called a soul in distress, a soul which does not know to what to cling; Ariel, impossible return; family, wife and child, had become symbols of a defeat. The champagne stood before me and the boom of the dance chased sparks into it of mirrors and light and strange constellations with secret promises of intoxication and torpor. In the same way the shining darkness of a river must promise stupor and peace to the hopeless who envisage death in its soothing eye. But this utter cowardice I scorn from afar with certain opposition. It was as if I spoke aloud to myself:

"Rather a bottle of gall than drown misery in drink. . . ." And in my head I began to rattle off a verse that I had once seen quoted in my daily paper: "Waiter, bring me some gall in a large glass."

"And if still sharper pain should cut through you?" a voice challenged in this crazy conversation with myself.

"It can't become sharper," I replied and in order to answer the challenge I deliberately, although with apparent carelessness so as not to attract attention to myself, threw my glass over.

The waiter who had modestly come up had not yet finished cleaning my little table when my heart was crushed still more caustically: after one accepts suffering, one never knows where the torment will end. The old gentleman was in a corner where there were carpets and low square little seats. Two girls had hold of him by the wrist and tuxedo and restrained him. A third held

up an open book and murmured something that the old dancer did not want to hear, for he tried to wrestle himself free. I stood up, walked by the gay little group, close enough to read askance at the top of the page of the book: "Your body is yours." All the disillusionment the ludicrous little gentleman had made Ariel suffer, three girls, three cherished young figures, now painfully made the man of years in me go under. The dream of my youth, which I did not want to renounce, was torn out of my hands, for perversity had always seemed to me the mask of old age and weariness.

I went to the wash-room. It was as if the little old dancer stood next to me, shedding into the basin two tears he could not keep back, and I could have done so along with him. When I returned to my little table I found my glass which the waiter had refilled. I was overcome by disgust. Nevertheless I pushed the champagne aside.

"In view of the fact that the decay can always go further," I said to myself in a glowing inner debate, "I am prepared for the worst. Lord, try me further if you so desire. I shall not flee; I shall not drink."

Indeed, my exhaustion was complete when a Negro suddenly cheered me up. In the middle of a fox-trot he gave a violent bang on the cymbals. He let its clattering drone on. The copper jingling quivered to the last fibres of my whole body. For one moment I no longer felt my misery: it was like a long echoing blow of the trumpet of archangels, which lifted me out of myself. It must have been sheer madness, but in the middle of all that worldly hullabaloo, those lamps, liqueurs, evening dresses and dancing I was suddenly conscious of a divine presence. Even more; unconsciously my eyes searched among the Negroes on the platform for a heavenly face, a heavenly light, love in two eyes. A thudding pain entered my heart, as if it had just stood still; my eyes remained fixed on the face of the Negro who controlled the instruments of percussion.

He was what is generally called a pure Negro: very ugly because of the protruding cheekbones, the brutish thick lips, the flattened nose, the ears that stuck out from the dusty frizzy hair. Only once in a while I saw his eyes; he clutched blindly at all the devices of the battery and handled them in blissful absorption. His fingers, which had long become red on the inside, let the drumsticks dribble on the hollow castanet, the little drums, the cymbals and drum backs with indescribable elegance. When he opened his eyes, a miracle happened: in the jet, in the middle of

the yellowish white, shot a spark of dull gold. That was not the wonder, though, but a look that was not of this world, the look of a savage, a man completely unconstrained, for whom a raindrop, a grass blade, a forest, a noise, are full of God and for whom each gesture is a sacrifice. When he opened his eyes, his lips at the same time parted over a painfully decayed set of teeth: the smile of the hideous. But he smiled at no one and resumed his play with the instruments of percussion with a touching seriousness, in an ecstasy, like a dedication, a rising beyond the world, a prayer.

I would not have been of my time if I had not fought this emotion with all the scepticism I was capable of. "This Negro wipes his bony structures squarely on all the instruments. He is bored. He earns his living and is resigned to his boredom," I meditated with self-contempt. "And then, then?" I replied to myself, always again surprised by the roll, the rhythm of the beats, the grating friction of steel fan-brushes over drums and cymbals, all sounds that cured me of my endless poisoning of the mind. Meanwhile the ecstasy continued to be clear on the Negro's face; it raised a hope in me which made me tremble.

"If I am not mistaken about this Negro," I finally thought, "who knows if I cannot realize the wonder that I have seen in him? Who knows what plans the Lord has for me? If I could make the great leap into jazz?"

A languishing accordion tango drew sweet rounded lines and movements out of the bodies. I had an urgent desire to pray, there, at that moment. Too averse to all ostentation, I made in thought the sign of the cross and that already gave me strength to suffer only triumphantly in my disillusionment.

When I left the 'Abbaye' it seemed to me as if the sea breeze, full of stars, blew freely through my body and I had undergone a great cleansing. The pits of despair lay, steep and safely crossed, behind me. I felt virile, ready to carry out my simple, my shabby, great plan.

There was no longer anything that still had much immediate importance· not the return to my wife, not the wait for the retreat to town. And nevertheless, how moved, though secretly, we were when we saw each other again after this absolute parting, after this far, somber voyage to inner solitude. My wife was waiting for me, as one roams along the quay and hopes for someone, not knowing what boat he has taken: love and patience and

anxiety melt together into a yearning cry that only the very sensitive hear.

I too had become sensitive again, having pity for conflicts and emotions other than my own. It was almost midnight. Jo had remained up. When I opened the door of the room, she did not look up from the book that she pretended to be reading. By circles of fatigue round her eyes and by an affected calm I immediately recognized her extreme consideration: she wanted to pretend that her reading had enthralled her so long and was doing so still, in order not to offend me with her anxious vigil, in order not to signify: "You see, my friend, how I sacrifice my night's rest, even more, my peace of mind to your caprices."

I went to her. I kissed her forehead, for I had to behave very nonchalantly so as not to mingle too much formal admiration of her self-denial with my surrender to love. She trembled under my kiss. She jumped up with suppressed over-excitement. A rapid flickering of her eyelashes made her eyes very anxious. That kiss on her forehead, was it still the cool absentmindedness, the estrangement? her glance asked my whole face. Her cheek moved hesitatingly and without asking, especially without entreating, past my mouth as if to know whether no urge from the heart would hold her in a fervent embrace. And it happened. In that vehement embrace coursed the violent alternating current of our rescued love,—a great love without great show. On my cheek I felt a tear that had burst from between her lashes. It is by way of such sensation that one descends to the murmuring depths of the soul, where one has crushed from holy feelings the bitterest happiness, the most blissful sorrows.

The same equilibrium, the same intertwining continued all the remaining days of our vacation, which we spent no more apart. Only at the end I began perhaps to long for the year of work at home. That was the first time that I felt homesick for my ordinary daily task—reconciled to my manufacture of furniture? But I would try to build a support.

Laugh, if you want: there are no small actions, if it means keeping a heart, a life, a love straight. Back at my work, I strengthened my position, for every evening, when the fall came, I became a jazz-player by my stove. I had a gramophone, and in the little mechanism sat my fellow players. It is difficult to make oneself understood, even by the persons with whom we have grown together—that wheel of a thousand reasons and feelings

cannot be taken apart, even if no virtuousness or obliging love is mixed up with it. Even my wife, usually so accommodating, protested crustily when I had a perfect battery of percussion instruments brought into the living-room. I laughed her indignation away—it was for me too holy and serious a necessity of life to be disturbed by her opposition.

Undeniably she was right when she sulkily left the sitting-room during my first exercises; the booming of the percussion drum, the roll and clatter of the various drums, the clash of the cymbals, even the tinkling of the triangle, which is after all an instrument full of refined sounds, were at first cannibal noises, the more so as I had great trouble with the syncopated rhythms. Incidentally, I beat out of time, drowned out the gramophone and was not yet able to produce the subtle shading with which a thump is reduced to a murmuring roll. And, of course, she failed to realize behind that grotesque business the laborious effort of soul that was practising for greater flights, the soul that was every day separating itself more surely from Ariel, the soul that was steeling the furniture manufacturer to his only and undying loyalty, the soul that purified itself in the limitation of wife and child, of household and dark death, lost itself and plunged in God.

But after a short time I had the jazz band in my blood. I reached a point where I was able to adjust all the percussion sounds to the volume of the gramophone music. At first it was the angular rhythmic clanking of Charleston and fox-trot, the far too soft melodic patterns of "Javas" and blues. And finally I climbed to the melodious heights of spirituals, sung by full Negro voices. I even went much further: I improvised with percussion instruments on airs by old masters like Palestrina and Bach. It was a day of happiness and temptation when a young composer, whose acquaintance I had made, felt so transported by my jazz performance that he tried to persuade me to perform in the concert hall.

My wife, however, cannot conduct herself in an unprejudiced way toward my so-called "strange mania." My progress has led her from astonishment to sharp annoyance. She understands me less as time goes on because she does not simply surrender to my jazz music. She asks herself: "Whence comes this caprice, whither will it take him?" I see it in her concerned face, when I wake from the inspiration of one of my performances and open my eyes again. Indeed, I already manage easily to ascend into the ecstasy that the jazz band player from the 'Abbaye,' or the Lord

Himself, revealed to me—ecstasy in which I beat my drums like consecrated instruments, from which sings and radiates my whole departed youth, a heroic love and subjection, an offering of all my tears, this whole heart of conflicting humanity. How could my wife understand that I love her and my son in all these percussion instruments, that I pray and sanctify my life through them?

It has therefore neither astonished nor discouraged me very much that every time I tune my beloved instruments an ever growing anger flashes in the eyes of my spouse. I am more obliging to her than ever, I surround her with the clear signs of a rejuvenated, elated love. I give her no single reason to show me smouldering annoyance. But it cannot be denied that she has transferred a strange hatred, which she cannot pile on my head, to my jazz-band battery, as if there was in the instruments a living soul, an evil spirit, responsible instigators of what she labels in me a pathological mania. Who will tell me where jealousy ends in a woman's heart, an inexorable hankering to attach the man to herself alone?

But the conflict between my wife and my jazz-band battery is another little drama of which I shall here merely note the miserable result. In the height of self-excitement, she murdered my big drum. With a violent blow of the pedal, like an explosion echoing through the house, she tore the parchment. Caustically, furious, I stood watching—at first disapproving; but when I saw what misunderstanding disturbed her so, a feeling of extenuation and strange regret came over me; how blind are our sorrows!

There is in this world no constant equilibrium. I had fought out a little drama with myself. The woman of my love, she who has won all by it, has risen in opposition. The harmony of my heart, which I have realized in the jazz band, is unbearable to her. I am an honest man and on the side of the Lord. Let me now search for an intelligible equilibrium between my wife and the equilibrium in myself. Peace to people of good will. But to show good will, always anew, that's a lustreless heroism, without drunkenness or rewarding intoxication, that's a heroism of long breath.

Translated by JO MAYO

Raymond Brulez

THE EIGHTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD

or "Happiness lies elsewhere . . ."

> . . . wretched one: go and sail where never the sun rises; where the grim waves stand on end like towers of ice, like rocks, and where neither flower nor leaf ever adorns the belly of Mother Earth!

AFTER SINBAD THE SAILOR HAD COMPLETED THE SEVEN VOYAGES whose adventurous nature is known to you, he decided to retire to a countryseat with a few faithful servants, where he intended to crown his achievements by writing a standard work about the history of navigation. But the popular hero, who upon his last return to Bassora had been triumphantly welcomed with a show of flags fluttering from every mast, the nervous shrieking of sirens and, above all, the elevating spectacle of thousands of waving hands, laughing eyes and exulting mouths, was slowly forgotten in his solitude. The photo services no longer requested his latest picture, the "Argus of the Press" no longer sent newspaper clippings, and the magazines no longer included him among the ten leading personalities of Arabia who could be interviewed during the slack season when it was customary to hold inquiries concerning disputed subjects such as: "co-education", "the wearing of soft or stiff collars" or "the return of art to a new classicism". Besides, when the time came to renew Sinbad's honorary chairmanship of the Navigation Society of Arabia, an unfledged little naval officer was elected in his stead, a young man who averred to have discovered the source of the Gulf Stream with a submarine.

Apparently Sinbad had outlived his fame. All this depressed him very much. Not that he had at the time undertaken his dangerous peregrinations out of a thirst for glory. It must be admitted that he always sought " adventure for adventure's sake", just as the sincere artist pursues "art for art's sake". But who can view the waning of his own fame with complete equanimity?

My name will surely turn up again some day, mused Sinbad, and that will be precisely on the day of my death. Then my black-bordered face will appear in the papers, the news reels

will include several yards of film dedicated to my person—between the opening of parliament and the last races. In the cafés and on the benches of the city parks, for just a little while I shall still be "the subject of all conversations". A few days later my funeral occurs "attended by vast crowds". The high dignitaries kick about the difficulty of reaching this remote provincial hole, and while perspiring profusely they stumble on behind my cold body down the dusty country road to "this damnably distant little village mosque", they already begin circulating false legends about my life. Then, as time passes, the little article which the encyclopedias concede to my deeds shrinks more and more. And it presumably ends with: "He also wrote a not undeserving history of navigation. . . ." *Not undeserving!* Do you hear this cautious praise: two negations which are meant to convey a feeble confirmation? And upon this I squander the last years of my life! . . . sighed Sinbad disconsolately, as he gazed at the pile of notes and musty books which created barren disorder on his desk. While out there the world. . . .

For indeed, out yonder the grain billowed toward the horizon like a sea. And a new yearning for the sea which hums like a beehive bubbled up in his adventurous heart. The sea whose surf,—a raging beast, foaming at the mouth,—pounces upon the dunes, while the stormwind chases the helplessly fluttering gulls along the coast like fallen autumn leaves. For there are still seas which he has not traversed, depths which he has not plumbed, forgotten islands concealing enclosed temples dedicated to unknown gods. Sinbad wants to return to the deserts where once his caravans of shaggy camels dotted the unending, barren sandplains like strange shrubs.

The setting sun on the western horizon sweeps over his litter of books with a golden sheaf of light, and suddenly reveals the gleaming full-bellied sails of the silver miniature galleon which had been presented to him by his native city, Bagdad, and whose artfully embossed prow bore the legend: "Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse! . . ."

So Sinbad decided upon a new voyage. Practical as the fellow was, he knew how to interest various institutions in his new project. For even the most selfish idealism must be built on a sound foundation. Thus the Arabian Academy of Science granted him a substantial federal subsidy on condition that Sinbad, in the course of his voyage, conduct a deep-sea investigation as to the gold content of sea water. Once the matter of finances had

been settled, Sinbad went to Bassora and there picked up the little cargo ship *Sea Dog* at a bargain price. A remarkable boat, which already had a hazardous past in its wake, and which had been in the service of various human passions. During the World War it had served as a munitions transport. After that, the C.P.N. wanted to equip it to capture Wielingen. There was, however, a dearth of volunteers for this expedition. Then it was converted into a "yacht for vacation cruises", which as a matter of fact consisted of taking aboard a few dozen "artistes lyriques" at Hamburg now and then, and setting them ashore at South America on foggy mornings and with romantic cautiousness. Some time later, the *Sea Dog* was purchased by American bootleggers, and off and on it had been riddled by the machine-guns of incorruptible revenue cutters. And Neptune and Mercury only know how it came about that this object was now being put up for sale in Bassora by a Jewish ironmonger.

As it lay there, nestled against the wall of the dry-dock, like a drunkard against a curb, its appearance was unsightly. But once the green seaweeds had been scraped off, the pockmarks caused by the muscle plague had been healed with a layer of tar, and the superstructure neatly made up in white and red, it could again pertly display itself upon the great sea lanes. In the meanwhile Sinbad had engaged the crew. A dozen congenial rogues: deserters from the last World War and other fine fellows for whom it was best to remain concealed from the keen-sighted police for several months. Furthermore, as ship's cook, a Frenchman who had become neurasthenic in the subterranean grottos of large cosmopolitan palaces, and had been led to believe that only an extensive sea voyage could restore his impaired health; as wireless operator, in a sparkling uniform, a brave Ephebian who had learned telegraphy from correspondence courses, now wanted some practical experience and at the same time desired to confront a romantic *Weltschmerz* with reality. And finally, as first mate, Stephens, a fellow who felt at home on every ocean and evidently had swum through various waters. Now the day of departure had come. The cargo: paradise wood and a parcel of Persian rugs intended for the wigwams of the last Mohicans had been brought on board. The smoking white stack of the *Sea Dog* resembles a gigantic cigarette advertisement. And up there a sailor is actually hanging a painted sign on the railing with the arrogant warning: "Keep clear of the propeller!" Which arouses sarcastic derision in the loafing idlers on shore belonging to the guild of those excellent helmsmen who are just where

they should be, and one of them loudly proclaims to anybody who cares to listen: "He'd better cross the ocean in a bathtub than in that insignificant little freighter . . ."; pessimistic remark which frightens to death the good-natured little mother in her Sunday coat, who now and then secretly presses a white handkerchief against the twitching corners of her mouth, or shyly waves her small, blue-veined hand to the young wireless operator, who does his best to act bold and calm. The annoying cables over which the onlookers stumble as they would over tree roots protruding from forest moss are finally unwound from the bitts, the siren puffs a graceful little white cloud which roars a mighty bellow, as though the ship's entire hull were nothing but an extraordinary, hollow sounding-board. Hereupon, the proprietress of "The Town of Liverpool" has her juke-box ceremoniously play "God Save the King" in honor of Stephens who, besides several pounds, also leaves behind the memory of a tattoed skin which constitutes in crude fashion a complete encyclopedia of nautical symbols, as well as of the names of women of all races and peoples.

The *Sea Dog* glides away from the quay and picks its course among the anchored fishing sloops and sailboats. In the clear channel it makes faster headway. Out of the smooth surface of the water the ship rams a seagull of foam which with its white wings gracefully nestles against the flanks of the prow. They pass the pilot-house whose semaphore waves a whole paternoster of well-meant signals. The two slightly diverging palisades sketch the strokes of a gigantic swimmer practising the overarm crawl; the surf surges against their extremities. Here the *Sea Dog* does not choose the briny deep, but the sea thrusts itself upon it in such a way that a wave gushes into the open porthole where the ship's cook is punctually inhaling salubrious iodine and bromide molecules from the air. And now the turbulent sea like a multitude of thousands on a great city square . . . !

Thus manned by devious, strange ambitions which, however, were bound together by Captain Sinbad's desire for adventure, the *Sea Dog* had for weeks been steaming towards its economic and at the same time esoteric destination. The coast line no longer broke the perfect, surrounding curve of the horizon. However, the ever-shifting circle whose restless center was the ship was, alas, not the famed geometric figure whose circumference lies everywhere and whose center nowhere. It remained a fact: the *Sea Dog* was imprisoned behind the bars of latitude and

longitude. And for a heart "yearning for infinite spaces" this was rather discouraging. To be sure, one was diverted by the rotation of approaching and vanishing days. Night froze the constellations upon the dome of heaven like frost-flowers, which the morning sun invariably thawed again. And there, too, between the masts hung the meshless hammock where, at the command of the medium, "Accumulator", the "astral self" of the Ether Muses obediently comes to swing itself. They did not, it is true, present the "music of the spheres", but the choice programs which Hilversum sent out to them via Bandoeng: selections from *Tosca,* the latest jazz songs and interesting observations concerning the attitude of the anti-revolutionary party in reference to the legal status of office clerks. After the ship's progress had for some time been favored by clear weather, benevolent winds and kindly currents, on a certain evening, at twilight, an unexpected storm broke loose. The strong wind scoured the rough-gray soap-clump that was the ocean into a flocky foam which gleamed pale against the dark firmament, where a first flash of lightning briefly betrayed the cracks in the cloud-urns. Heavy seas crashed over the forecastle and hail clattered against the hull and on the zinc decks. The *Sea Dog* bore up bravely. Undismayed, it vaulted over and through the obstacle-hedges of the mighty storm-waves, while its stack tossed a tangled mane of smoke. Fortunately this ordeal did not last long. The squall departed and presently there again on the declouded horizon stood, in perfect roundness, peaceful as a lone, illuminated porthole, the full moon. . . .

Sinbad inspected his ship. A broad smile spread over the stokers' faces, still pale and beaded with the sweat of fear, now that the captain assured them that danger had passed and praised them for having kept up the fires so well. The wireless operator, who had remained magnificently calm, was busy polishing the brass of his instruments; and Stephens insisted with his gum-chewing mouth that he had experienced much beastlier moments in the Straits of Magellan. But when Sinbad entered the map-room, he detected a sailor there who hastily fled and whose surprised Kalmuck face he did not recognize as belonging to one of his own crew. And worse still, the panes there had been shattered by the storm! Heavy seas and showers of hail had soaked all the maps. The colors of land and sea had fused until the maps resembled soiled palettes; the lines of latitude and longitude were erased!

"The only thing that remains legible are the fingerprints of this skunk's filthy paws!" Stephens declared.

"This is great, now we'll have to sail blind, just about like Columbus or Vasco . . ."

A sailor came to report that a vain search had been made for the stowaway in the galley, the hold and the cabins. Only the fugitive's cap had been found in a deserted passageway. He held the dirty object between the tips of his thumb and index-finger as if it were a dead rat. On its sweat-stained band stood: ATOS, but several gilt letters had apparently peeled off.

"That's clear! Must be: H.M.S. ATOS," said Stephens.

"ATOS? If it were ATHOS with an H, it'd remind me of the mountain in Greece where the famous monks' republic is."

". . . Or of the Three Musketeers . . .," suggested the book-loving wireless operator.

"Ship sighted to starboard!" the lookout suddenly warned. They ran up to the bridge again. Indeed, at a short distance, in the pale-blue light of the full moon, they distinguished a strange affair resting motionless and dark upon the calm surface of the sea. It exactly resembled a 16th century Spanish galleon like the silver ship the city of Bagdad had presented to Sinbad. The masts were stripped of their sails, and with their triple yard-arms they formed huge papal crosses. Sinbad had the *Sea Dog's* searchlight turned on the ship, which now assumed the chalky, ghastly white appearance of a pavilion at an exposition. The lofty poop and the bowsprit were decorated with mythological figures, monstrous animals and carved foliage. Sinbad read the name "THALASSA II". "What a queer derelict!" Stephens uttered his surprise; "if the war wasn't over, I'd take it for a mystery ship, a submarine trap!"

"Perhaps a ship for an historical film. For 'Ben Hur' they built a whole fleet of Roman galleons like this," explained the wireless operator. "Signal to the THALASSA II to ask whether it needs anything," requested the captain.

And surely enough, the boy returned at once, astonished, with the answer: "Alpha-omega! . . ."

"A silly joke! And in Greek, too . . .," Stephens exclaimed angrily—as though this detail were especially objectionable; for, since he had left behind three teeth on the basalt blocks of the Piraeus in a nocturnal scuffle, the helmsman's attitude toward the Hellenes was not a friendly one.

Sinbad sensed adventure! Just as unexpectedly and mysteriously his previous wonderful encounters had begun. He ordered them to draw up alongside the other ship. The *Sea Dog* approached carefully, until the sailor who was sounding warned

them that the water was beginning to get shallow. Was the THALASSA II perhaps on a shoal? But the distance between them was so short that one could cast a cable whose end was knotted like a lasso around the neck of one of the mermaid statues on the rear of the vessel. Along this, Sinbad began to climb to the galleon. Stephens, who was watching him, remarked: "But damn it all, we made a mistake! The name of the ship isn't THALASSA II, its THANATOS II. Its godfather must have had gruesome ideas. . . ."

A creaking of moldered wood. . . . Through the upper deck rash Sinbad fell into space!—His fall shattered the keel, *which was as thin as an eggshell!* Bruised, he swam back to the *Sea Dog,* but reached out in vain for the life-lines which had been thrown to him. He felt the metal flank of his own ship with its smooth rivet-heads glide past his shoulder. For a moment the horrified face of the cook appeared to him on the medallion of a porthole. The whirling, cleaving screw approached and struck the helpless man between his neck and shoulders like the blow of an ax! . . .

His heart pumped blood through the wound. Euphoria of bleeding to death in water, like that of Petronius when he committed suicide by slashing his wrists in his bath. . . . Now this restless heart is running down. . . . Now it has stopped. . . . He knows it. His eyes no longer receive impressions. In vain his hands blindly try to find each other. Floating. . . . Quiet. . . . Only in his ears still the mighty throbbing of a factory. Then the slow trumpetting of horns in the forest. And now the softer throbbing of a single long-drawn-out cello tone quavering into silence. . . . Was this death . . . ? He has, however, still the consciousness of a remembered existence! What a Sinbad he had been! The Sinbad of eight adventurous voyages, shipwrecks and miraculous rescues. Sinbad for whom the back of a whale had served as an emergency raft; whom the bird Roc had borne through the skies to the valley of diamonds; who had burned out the eye of the cyclop with the spit upon which the latter had roasted his human victims; who had escaped from the tomb where he had been buried alive with his dead wife; who had been attacked by pirates; who had taken the precious gifts of the Calif Haroen-al-Rasjid to the king of the island of Serendib. . . . Sinbad whose life came to an end on his eighth voyage. . . . Physically, at least. His body now drifts somewhere between the surface of the water and the inaccessible bottom of the ocean like a Cartesian diver. And when it is washed ashore, the coroner who

has been summoned will examine the lungs to ascertain whether he died from the wound or from the suffocation of drowning. But how little Sinbad bewails the fate of his bodily remains!

However, because of this memory of his life, this memory which perpetually renews itself as long as it continues to exist, Sinbad will not completely vanish into Nothingness! He must not let go of it, he must cling to it with the power which is: his soul!

How often and how fast did the memory of his life's history repeat itself? Time was immeasurable. . . . But one day this purely spiritual process was clouded by a physical sensation. The "ego" of Sinbad reached out like the caressing of water along limbs beginning to feel anew. And what a surprise it was to ascertain that his will, awakened from pure contemplation, could again direct motion! His hand touched his neck and shoulders: the wound was no longer there! Then his palms felt something like an obstacle, a wall. Was this the keel of the *Sea Dog* or of the THANATOS II? But the wall gave way elastically and then surrounded him! It was like the envelope of a balloon divided into squares by its meshes, under which he was going to be buried. Then a strange, powerful motion propelled him out of this confining embrace . . . till a hoarse, rasping, inhuman shriek and the merciless pricking of light through his shut eyelids made him faint! . . .

. . . Air which effervesces through his nose, throat and lungs like bubbles escaping from new wine. . . . At rest, and rocked as though by a ship on gentle waves or by a mother's arms. . . .

"Make sure, Sinbad, open your eyes! . . ." Bent over him he saw three similar, gigantic, earnest faces like those of Buddha statues in Indian forests. And between these figures there appeared a green canopy like that of a translucent forest-dome whose foliage has grown together to form a seamless surface! Was this the sky? A green sky? He feared color-blindness; then one no longer differentiated between red and green, he knew. But he saw the other colors too: the golden blond hair of the giantesses, the red of their lips, the blue of their eyes which bore witness with a friendly smile that they were not idols but living beings. His gaze swerved around their bodies, and then Sinbad discovered that all three of them were reposing upon the water with the scaly, mother-of-pearl colored tails of mermaids! . . .

Your Majesty must not, however, think that with this, my story, I desire to incite you to doubt the authenticity of that

which the Koran admonishes us to believe concerning the hereafter. But is it not plausible that for a person as eminent as Sinbad, who had so many illustrious deeds to his credit, Allah should make an exception regarding his otherwise inexorable predestination and just for this once suspend the validity of the banal laws of nature? . . .

The sea-world into which Sinbad was thus reborn as a defective child—for his body ended in two limbs which remained unscaled and finless—extended in dimensions whose mathematical category is not exactly known to us, but which certainly are not those of Einstein's universe. And just as those who believe in relativity, in order to convey a plastic image of their finite cosmos, try "for the sake of convenience" to represent it in the form of "a slightly curved oval watch", thus I beseech Your Majesty to think of this other world as a gigantic phonograph record. Just as the lines engraved in ebony encircle the pole of the steel pivot, thus, concentric, gray, muddy waves rolled around an iceberg of rather unimpressive proportions which the Centaurs had reserved for their own use. The strangest thing of all was that on the emerald dome of heaven, which was apparently self-illuminating, there appeared neither sun nor moon nor stars. Thus there were no directions, no north, south, west or east and —as Sinbad thought at first—also no time.

Work was unknown to this nation of mermaids and tritons. They lived a life of indolence but not of ease, for they had to feed themselves upon that which floated around them: uprooted aquatic plants and a sort of foam-manna. Among them there existed no differences of race or class. A society of integral communism under a sort of "theocratic" supervision by the Centaurs, the "guardians of truth", who could be seen, bald and fat-bellied, walking about on the white shores of the iceberg, with the stately tread of their four horse's legs. To be sure, in the ever intermingling masses of water it would have been impossible to partition off any private property. Absolute brotherhood and equality prevailed, equality which even mirrored itself in their physical appearance, so that all seemed to be of the same age, and could not be distinguished from their "classmates". Tritons and mermaids also bore no personal family or Christian names, but solely and exclusively a number. An individual was nothing else than a "member of a class", "somebody 15" or "27", for example.

In this world where no change of day or night or of seasons occurred, where all atmospheric conditions remained unaltered, sickness was unknown. The tritons and mermaids lived their

monotonous life together until the moment of collective death, which seemed to be prescribed by Nature herself. The "Great Whirlpool", an occurrence "which was attended by a certain solemnity", announced itself by causing the green of the sky to change to somber purple veined with innumerable lightnings. These lightnings, however, did not flash briefly, they glowed for a long time, somewhat like a rainbow in our world; so that the sky remained covered with a network of phosphorescent weed-roots, as it were. When the Centaurs signalled with their whelk-horns, the sea people formed a procession which set out from the iceberg to the foaming edge of an enormous whirlpool. The black water-ridges funneled toward a seething center from which a blue haze arose. Here the oldest generation, which was designated by the number 50, sang a last farewell song. Sinbad understood that they "willingly went to their deaths in order to furnish the basic material for waiting life, so that the eternal cycle should not be broken". It was truly a moving Ave morituri! . . . Then the streamer of those voluntarily dedicated to death once more swirled past the onlookers like the last spin of a carrousel, to the mournful blaring of the whelk-horns, in order, hand in hand, to entrust themselves to the revolving water-walls which dragged them along to the boiling deep. . . .

Thus it was death which in this world divided time and lent it rhythm. For all who were born between two "Great Whirlpools" belonged to the same "grade", and after the ceremony everybody's number was increased by one. Only the Centaurs appeared to be immortal and therefore they were also sexless.

After Sinbad, seated on the shoulder of a powerful triton, had for the first time witnessed this essential occurrence, he was old enough to be educated by the Centaurs, who taught school along the edge of the iceberg, where the knowledge-hungry tritons and mermaids were requested to repose.

What the teachers had to relate was probably not very important. The chief consideration was that "things were essentially as they appeared to be". There was no other reality besides that which was directly perceptible. The world was finite and limited to this body of water concentrically situated around the holy iceberg, the "axis of the universe, resting upon the fundament of the sedimentary stratification of primordial being, having sprung from permanent necessity." It was of primary importance to know this little sentence well by heart, for it constituted the core of the Centaurs' whole metaphysics. Matter was without origin and formed an "indispensable counterweight to Nothing-

ness". In it existed two "principles of energetics": "Good", the centripetal force which bound all things together in perfect harmony around the iceberg, and "Evil", the centrifugal force which, were it ever to dominate, would cause the waters to flow asunder and the universe to revert to the "chaos of contradictions" and finally to "the volatilization of Nothingness!" . . .

And you are politely requested to accept this "truth" unhesitatingly and not to formulate any personal interpretations. This the tritons and mermaids did very willingly, so that the results of the final examinations were always uniformly gratifying.

About death: "resolution of the antinomy of freedom and determinsim", the Centaurs taught that, after the "Great Whirlpool", the bodies of the dead returned to "original plasma, the organic pulp where, after having enjoyed a bit of well-deserved rest, at a suitable moment, the biogenetic forces again began to ferment at the summons of the necessary replenishment of life". Between death and rebirth there were 50 stages, which exactly corresponded in duration to the period of 50 "years of life". "Because the complete evolutionary cycle necessarily had to present the mystic total of 100!" One argument was as good as another. Moreover, all this metaphysics struck Sinbad as being too simple to be true. This cyclic materialism naturally left no room for the existence of an individual soul, which would only have been a nuisance in this social community based upon "the firm linking together of the organized and conscious individuals to achieve the higher unity of the group, of the completed circle". And morals also were wholly in accord with integral communism. In order to prevent "the formation of a family-nucleus", the law decreed that sexual life should be promiscuous, but that this promiscuity should be restricted to members of the same "year". And as all tritons and mermaids of the same age were physically and literally alike as two scales—they constituted just so many identical X-es—this regulation was very natural and gave no cause for jealousy. Thus it was only sinful to fall in love with an older or younger mermaid and vice-versa. Many of them thought that Sinbad's monstrous figure was to be blamed on such a relationship. And he alone, besides his "year-number", bore the disgrace of being branded with his own name. The mermaids called him the "scaleless one" and his playmates "the smooth one" (with a pejorative connotation).

And it was perhaps this disapproval which prompted him to preach *his* truth to these children of nature. For, incessantly, while he was growing up, the memory of his former existence on

earth remained with him. To anyone who wanted to listen, Sinbad told about our world. It was really a very difficult undertaking to convey a plastic picture of our nature and a conception of our life together to these primitive beings. It was, however, possible for example to compare a lotus flower to their tail-fins, a pine-cone to the scaled tritons' flanks, a crackling fire to the mermaids' red hair fluttering in the wind. At a pinch, he could even suggest the atmosphere of a stock-exchange session by comparing it to the din of the sea. But once the anatomic and other metaphors had been exhausted, not much remained for him to use except the suggestion of beautiful sounds, which permitted each triton and mermaid to form his own ideas. Such was the power of his words to stimulate the imagination! The principal thing, Sinbad correctly surmised, was to conjure up that mysterious aura which surrounds the names of all earthly objects, beings and happenings, and which bestows exquisite happiness upon each one who is readily receptive to it. It cannot be denied that Sinbad possessed certain poetic talents. In masterly fashion he celebrated the play of the sun, the azure sky and the infinitely variegated clouds in the quadrille of the seasons; the star-foaming nocturnal sky; the moon, at noon almost as invisible as a lump of ice thawing in water, but at night gleaming like the full-bellied silver sail of a miniature galleon; the good terrestrial globe wrapped in its domino of black night and white day. He celebrated the separation of land and water, and how, notwithstanding, the ocean penetrates to the heart of a continent through arteries of rivers, streams and brooks. He celebrated the animals: the horses, the cows: Centaurs who do not give one lessons, but serve mankind; seagulls tacking against the wind, swallows whose wing stroke resembles the fluttering of nervous lashes; cobwebs stringing raindrops to form a pearly design. Then the plants of the fields: willows standing up to their chins in the flood of a sea of grain; woods abounding in echoes. And technical marvels: stations at night like lumps of ore in which sparkle topazes, sapphires and rubies. . . .

Sinbad sang the melodious names of nations and cities, and above all else praised our mighty Bagdad. And then he eulogized man—dressed, creative, political man, harnessing the forces of nature to suit his own convenience. He glorified the blessed weariness after work, and the pleasures of relaxation: Friday's surprise in the form of changed motion picture programs. Man's existence was not as colorless and monotonous as that of the tritons, but was full of dramatic emotion. Man tasted happiness:

that of recovering from illness, of being promoted after the punctilious discharge of one's duties, of seeing one's honor restored after having been misjudged. He spoke of various professions: all of them useful and for one reason or another picturesque, besides presenting a thousand opportunities for practising civil, ethical, martial and sportsmanlike virtues. Then the dwellings: the humble cottage of the poor, upon whose whitewashed walls hang newspaper photos of the ruling dynasty, testifying to the loyalty of the occupants; as well as the palaces of the rich, which are decorated with the higher, abstract color-harmony of grouped geometric figures.

And thus Sinbad also got around to contrasting the magnificence of private property with the poverty of the integral communism of the tritons. The greatest joy was property: a little piece of rich earth, neatly surrounded by a fragrant hedge, a fence with gilt-tipped lances, or a wall topped with fragments of glass. And this ideal principle of private property was sublimely crowned with the accepted code of ethics. Love was concentrated upon one person—naturally without, for that reason, withholding well-intentioned sympathy from other fellow-beings—this one person was the faithful companion who always stood by one's side, whose heart and soul vibrated to all sorrow and joy, who presented one with real children which inherited one's features, character and fortune. And the symphony of human life ended in a death which was definitive, blissful rest, glorious quiet from which one would never again be roused by the "Eternal Return"! (Sinbad's own case merely constituted the one exception which was needed to prove the rule.)

It was especially the exaggerated individualism of earthly civilization which impressed these sea-people. This "levelling" equality for which we humans strive so hard (when we belong to those classes which possibly have more to win than to lose) was a common property of which the tritons were heartily sick. It was exactly this "old whirled" stagnation, this "lack of history" which made these people unhappy. For happiness is never what one possesses, but always "lies elsewhere." . . . Thus his listeners quite naturally began to ask the "Smooth One" to lead them to this ideal world. And Sinbad was incautious enough to agree to their request. And he promised them: the Earth, the Sun, the Stars and very emphatically the Moon in its various phases. Now the question may be raised whether this prospective journey to the earth should not be considered to be solely of allegoric significance, and whether Sinbad did not essentially mean that this

Realm was situated in the soul of each triton and mermaid; and thus that they "must develop their personalities", "build up feelings of self-esteem" and other fine ethical projects of this sort.

Though I incline toward abstract, even mythical explanations, I think I must believe that Sinbad was seriously planning an actual expedition. His idealism was always coupled with a generous dose of practical realism. And in his imagination, the brave adventurer probably already saw himself triumphantly swimming up the Euphrates at the head of this new exodus. It would not even surprise us if he had made all kinds of earthly plans. For example: to appear in vaudeville. "Sinbad and his Tritons!"; "The 20 Mermaids". To recreate the scene in a gigantic aquarium. Apotheosis: the fountains of Versailles with tableaus, and he himself as Roi-Soleil!

But how to find one's way on this unending expanse of water, under the green sky in which no constellations beaconed, and where no compass-rose blossomed? The poet, to be sure, contends:

> Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
> Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst;

but a reliable compass would have stood our new Moses in good stead. One thing was certain: he would depart from the iceberg, and whatever the future held in store, when the unknown presented actual problems to be solved, he was confident that he would not be at a loss.

But now the Centaurs still had to have their say in the matter! . . . As long as the "Smooth One" had limited himself to reciting his little poems about this mythical Utopia, they had bothered very little about him. The Centaurs attributed all these "original, romantic brain-waves" to his physical defects. Apropos of which one coined the phrase: finless—brainless. But when they noticed the fanatic following the prophet was attracting and heard of the exodus which had been planned, their consternation was great! This was understandable: it is never pleasant for the dignitaries of a cult to witness the defection of their followers. And now they were threatened by the danger that thousands of tritons and mermaids would leave the holy iceberg to follow this monster to a destruction which had nothing to do with the "Great Whirlpool".

Their resolution was quickly made. In vigorous formation, the Centaurs plunged into the water, swam toward the rebellion,

kicked the gathering apart with their hard hoofs, took the leader prisoner and dragged him along to the iceberg. There he would be tried for his false teachings.

The prosecution hurled all sorts of sophisms at the deformed feet of this "rebel", this "adventurer": that he incorporated "the evil centrifugal principle, and that apparently being afraid of the 'Great Whirlpool,' he wanted to slip away along the tangent from the cycle of Eternal Return"; that he was ruining the young people by preaching "an immoral and unnatural monogamy" which, if it were carried out, would lead to the fatal destruction of all solidarity and would cause the ring of the communistic structure of society to burst asunder into egoistic smithereens!

The Centaurs, however, were magnanimous. They would forgive him all these blasphemies if he were willing solemnly to declare that this heresy, these "disastrous divagations in every sense of the word" about that other Earthly world were nothing more than a figment of the brain, a bit of tritonic deceit which he had invented just to "pass the time away". But above all, he must publicly avow that the iceberg indubitably was the "axis of the universe, resting upon the fundament of the sedimentary stratification of primordial being, having sprung from permanent necessity!"

There stood the accused, both of his legs firmly planted in the truth of his original human existence! He could not do otherwise than remain faithful to his memories! . . .

Sinbad viewed his judges with a melancholy smile. His answer would be succinct. With cold condemnation and the steely emphasis of conscious self-esteem he raised his voice:

"I am not a member of your gang! I am not number so-and-so! I am Sinbad the sailor from Bagdad, and I have experienced more during my eight individualistic voyages than you millions of sleepyheads in your poor, boringly organized community! In no way do I disavow *my* truth. My Earth, with all its bright colors and perfumes unknown to you, revolves in dimensions different from yours. And concerning your 'sedimentary stratification of primordial being' I permit myself, worthy Centaurs, by way of explanation, to say this: The foundations of your famous iceberg, at the very most, extend downward only nine times as far as that part which protrudes above the surface of the sea! I can demonstrate this to you by the laws of physics. A stupid fish can swim under it. And far from being the 'immovable pole of the universe', it is nothing but a rough-hewn, unwieldy mass which floats around trusting to luck. . . ."

Nobody will be surprised to hear that condemnation followed upon such a tactless defense. One can certainly remain objective, can one not, toward all ideologies; but to be offended regarding one's holiest convictions, to be positively insulted is too much even for the most impartial judge! The sentence was as follows: that the guilty one be drawn and quartered. Besides "public disgrace"—and this penalty would have been much too light for such a great crime—one knew no other punishments there.

Four of the strongest Centaurs were tied to Sinbad's wrists and ankles. A whelk-horn trumpeted the signal. The monstrous executioners pulled this rebellious, adventurous body to pieces, dragged its bleeding limbs across the white surface of the iceberg, painting a red cross which perhaps corresponded to the cardinal points of our compass. But at the spot of his execution, Sinbad's warm-blooded heart thawed itself a shaft through the ice, and heavily freighted with its golden cargo of rich memories, it sank to the sediment of eternity.

Translated by JOSEPHINE VAN AS

PART VII

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

J. Slauerhoff

LARRIOS

WAS IT BY CHANCE THAT I MET YOU, UNEXPECTEDLY, IN PLACES AS far apart as the world is wide? Why should I find you again and again where I must lose you, hopelessly, each time? I cannot believe it was fate, for I never could share your lot, scarcely touch it; nor have I lived long enough to learn whether I changed it in the least.

Was it by chance? What evil destiny caused me to find you four times, under strange circumstances and, almost at once, to lose you again?

It began long ago. Europe was not yet slowly dying, but the land through which I traveled was even then dead. The extremities of a diseased body may begin to mummify while the body lives on in apparent health. I passed over hot, hard plains, as the slopes fell inertly away, where few houses stood and few cattle grazed; where many stones were strewn and the points of rocks stuck out from the soil like knuckles through dry skin. I had left a ship in one of the southern ports, because the food on board was even more rotten than the scoundrelly crew. I hoped to find another in Bordeaux, a better one if possible. First afoot, then by freight train, I came from the southern heat over the sharp, cold ridge of the Sierra Nevada and then downward to the warm plateau and in three days reached Granada. I slept in a park, not venturing my rags or my jaded spirits in the princely Alhambra; but in the early morning I took a train for Madrid and was cooped up for almost three days in a third-class compartment where soldiers slept on the benches, or in blankets on the filthy floor, already exhausted from I know not what expedition against a *pronunciamento* in the South. Neither did I venture into the Plaza de Toros in Madrid, though it was Sunday. I knew indeed that the sight of blood would be unbearable to me. I hurried nervously through the quiet, deserted city and took the train for the North, and in that wandering, strange condition I reached the point of sleeplessness wherein one no longer knows whether

one is hungry or revolted by food, exhausted or capable of going much further. With an army in that state it is possible to win battles, or suddenly to lose everything in a panic because of one soldier who has dropped his weapons. At last I slept through every stop, through every station and was finally awakened by a shuddering halt. It was Burgos. The squat cathedral stood in the distance amidst a group of low, gray houses. The end of the long train was halting before a row of city houses of that ugly, barrack-like structure to be found everywhere, even in dead Spain. I turned away and closed my eyes. The train stopped for a long while and was finally set into motion with a jerk, and my heart seemed to stand still in I know not what sudden despair at this departure. What could there be in this city where I had never been, of which I knew nothing but that there was an old cathedral where Columbus lay buried?

I sprang to the window and saw nothing but long verandas of red brick houses, divided by partitions from ground to roof into rows of hutches. I was about to turn aside. Then you appeared on one of the verandas of the last house. Then it began. You leaned over the unpainted balustrade. At first you did not look up while I in one glance took you in from top to toe, from skin to your very core, to myself. Yet you looked like so many Spanish women, a mantilla around your slim shoulders, but betrayed in your attitude the possibility of languorous, graceful motion and, of course, there was a red flower in the all too gleaming hair. I could not see your eyes but guessed their color and expression from your whole appearance. When you lifted them just before the now swiftly passing of the train, a few yards off from the window, I saw that they were full of disturbance, full of a suffering that has endured for centuries, never yielding to pain and subjection but grown great in opposition; and a something indescribable seemed to wait in readiness to become proud and irresistible, as if the long abasement was undergone voluntarily through a strange delight in self-probation.

So you looked up at me, and I forgot everything, even that I was being dragged by. Then I awakened to the torture that overtakes anyone suddenly confronted with a vital decision, which, delayed for a moment, can never be taken again and, taken at once, is irrevocable. This is the true death struggle, though in the midst of life; compared to it the later death is a painless drifting-away; and I stood still and lost you, Larrios. I left you alone among enemies, and perhaps your endurance had come to an end just at that moment, and you fell a prey to them. I lived

your life condensed into a moment and suffered and, motionless, was carried on. Then I leaped up and should, perhaps, have jumped but at that instant you placed one quiet hand over your dark brows and waved to me with the other. I could not be mistaken. I was the only one who hung so far out of the moving train, and I knew: you wanted to see me again and called me invitingly to you. Now, no desperate leap; in Vittoria I could get out and walk back, or, if need be, ride the rails; but on the way my old doubts and my doubting self overtook me. Was she any different from the many in this land, pious, stupid, beautiful, who kneel in the dark cathedrals with the same absent devotion whether they be much tried women or much used whores? And if she held a secret within her would she be aware of it herself, living in a trance from which no awakening was possible? Would she not laugh in embarrassment if someone came to her saying:

"Look, my feet are sore: I've walked from Vittoria to Burgos for you."

"Why walked?"

"Because I had no money and wanted to see you again."

"Why want to see me again if you have no money to pay me?"

Why that gesture? Could it have been mere habit? But to one who would never return? I listened to a conversation going on in the train among salesmen who traveled weekly between Bordeaux and Madrid. I did not want to think and I could not sleep. I was staring vacantly out over the arid plains when, suddenly as it grew dark and threatened rain, I saw another old cathedral. It stood alone, under a shadow that narrowed and widened with the sun, like ebb and flood, and never wholly lifted. Flowers stood shaking in the wind, red petals atremble, fluttering against the dark, damp stone. And then I shut my eyes. In Vittoria I got out, but staggered before I was off the platform, dizzy with lack of food. I had no money, the ticket to Bordeaux was my only earthly possession. Larrios, forgive my hesitation, not my suspicions, though they came from the life I led more than from myself; forgive me for going further, for further deserting you. I should only have reached you dying. In Bordeaux I might find a ship, get well again, wait and seek you out from the next port. I did get a ship, but it had orders for Seattle, a long way off—but I thought then that death was still further.

Then came the second time. After ten months of constant shifting from ship to ship I reached Santander and could take a train to Burgos. I walked its streets for days, sat for hours in the

cathedrals, visited all the markets, watched the exodus from factories and caught many a mocking word, and in the evenings I tramped the sparsely lit streets; but it became clear to me one evening that I should not find you, for who has found by searching? I could stay no longer in Burgos, but neither could I leave Spain. It was as though in that land I felt myself with you. I turned southward and, one evening, after a long trek over the mountains, I came to the dried bed of a river that by way of old Moorish Malaga flows to the sea. I saw it lying between two hills flecked with the red of sunset; its blocks of houses dingy white with black spots of abandoned ground between them.

At that moment it began to rain. The yellow, uneven bed filled slowly with water that first colored the bottom gray and then began to stream through the numerous gullies. Mule trains that had at first followed the soft river bottom climbed up and struggled on over the stony path on the bank. On their sunken backs the pack animals bore through the melancholy evening the fatigue of the long day. Going faster, I was not able to pass them. When I sat down somewhere on a hayrick the drivers went into an *osteria,* and when I got up they had emptied their glasses and went on, right before me. So, at the end of this dreary procession, I approached the city. It had begun to rain harder. The river now foamed over its full width and swept dry shrubs under the bridges. That day I had had nothing but stale bread, not daring to take a glass of wine which afterwards makes walking so heavy. I was sweating and soaked with rain, my clothing stuck to my skin, and I was seized with a gray sadness that only the wanderer knows when he comes at evening into a city never before visited, where the lights and quiet of evening glow as things apart from him. The suburb began to spread out: low, dark houses with broken windows. The caravan spread itself out on a dark square, and suddenly I was alone and I missed that company at first undesired. I was not thinking of you then. I was cursing myself for trailing out here instead of being on some ship in the offing. I leaned against a bridge. Out of a narrow, dark side street a figure came toward the bank, skirts lifted. Under the umbrella a pale face appeared, a lily with a large, dark calyx hanging over it. She walked with a light step as if released after a hard day's work. Then she came up to me, and I saw that it was you for whom I had almost stopped searching, and with a wonderful, pitying gesture you held the umbrella over both our heads and touched my shivering body with your own. Wordless, I went with you, not knowing what to say. I had waited too long, thought too

much. At last with gentle force I wanted to make you take a glass of wine in a brightly lit café. But you laughed and took my sleeve and wrung the water from it and pulled me along. We went through numerous alleys and up many steps to a small room with two narrow windows; beyond them, the shallow dusk. There you lit a lamp that shone on a brown statuette of the Virgin; and I saw your room: a bed, a table and on it a sewing machine; on the wall two banal paintings, and on a shelf some crockery, that was all. Even the Japanese girls who squat, sleep, make up, eat and give themselves to their clients on one and the same mat, have more. They have their vase with its branch and a flower curving outward, a screen with its flight of storks, a graceful fan.

You did not make ready at once, as do they who must earn—the English who say in harsh voices: "Have you short time"—or the Japanese who save assiduously for their dowries; and the Spanish factories also pay far too little. You helped me out of my leaden clothing and wrapped me in a rough woolen cloak. Did a monk leave his habit, together with his faith, here with you? In any case it was warm. For a long while I lay shivering under the covers while you finished some work on the machine and knelt before the statuette and then sang in a soft monotone so that, resting, I kept awake. It was late when you undressed and came to me. I did not ask much of your love, I was soon asleep, and when the morning dawned grayish red over the wall, the place at my side was empty. What was I to do? To spend all day there was impossible. With all that I still had to say, stored up for years, it was too much for me. I had only asked:

"Did you know in Burgos that I would come back?"

And you: "Yes, but not here."

I could not hold out any longer, ran through a few streets, and discovered in a small, noisy square that I had lost my way. From which street had I come? It struck me with a horrible shock: found and instantly lost again—and I wandered on in the maze of narrow streets. Then I returned to the river and tried to find my way from there, climbed stairs and went down them, not even knowing whether your room was on the fourth floor or the fifth; I knocked on many a door and was driven away. At noon I climbed the blazing Alcazador hoping to recognize from the height what I could not discover below. I sat there on a pile of ruins and lost consciousness. I thought I saw a woman with black hair and a red flower lean from a window and I started up, but a heavy weight on my shoulder pressed me down. Gypsies stood all around me, and a girl had set a heavy jar on my shoulder;

they all laughed, but the girl saw the despair in my eyes and lifted the jar from my shoulder to my lips. That evening I walked the streets for hours. Did I hope to meet you, or some other with whom I could forget you? You know how despair confounds all things—hate and love.

I stumbled, exhausted into a public house in some byway and drank to benumb myself; my head sank to the table; a hard slap on the back roused me to face a heavy, potbellied fellow with a flabby red neck and watery eyes.

"What the hell do you want?"

"A man: my quartermaster deserted."

"Where are you going?"

"Everywhere, my ship is a good old tramp."

Ah, Larrios, since I could not find you in Malaga again, why not then everywhere? I agreed, received thirty pesetas down and bought a shabby outfit, and that same night I lay in a pitching forecastle among other offscourings of the sea.

The *Glenmore* was not a bad ship. While on most the hammock is the only bed and must be rolled up at break of day, here we had each a bunk to take refuge in. Three tiers of them, in three rows along the walls of the forecastle, but you could cut off your own by means of a curtain and be alone and unwatched. There was room on the wall for a few photos or prints; everyone seemed to find that most beautiful which he had never seen. A Chinese had adorned his wall with a Dutch mill and a girl from Marken; the boatswain, a Norwegian, lay staring at a geisha, her hair dressed high, with Fiji in the background. My wall remained empty: whose picture should I hang there? I wanted you alone, Larrios, before my eyes and I always saw your face there, every feature, and with my knife I began to cut lines as I lay sleepless in the berth; gradually they began to take shape. The wood lost color and one morning in the early light I clearly saw your face. Perhaps I alone could see it—but I saw it. Only in full light was it obscured again. Yet I was afraid that someone else might see it and when, in an old *London News,* I came across a head that resembled yours a little, I hung that over it so that the place was covered, but I could see you by pushing the picture aside. The day came when the *Glenmore,* after a bad collision, was laid up and we were paid off. That happened in Swansea. We waited in the seaman's house for another ship. The watchman stopped me at first but finally let me by on the mumbled excuse of something forgotten and the shilling I gave him. There in the night, on that dead ship, I cut you from the wall and took

you with me. Two weeks later I managed to become fourth officer on the *Elefanta,* bound for the East and to stay there. I shared a cabin with the third officer. You lay in a drawer, your double stood on the table. I saw you only when I came down from my watch but you had changed, your face seemed more suffering. It saddened me to see. For a long while I did not look at it. I was almost never alone. I would have liked your picture tattooed on my breast to keep you with me always, but who could do that? I myself branded your name in the flesh under my arm. I didn't know, didn't hope that you might one day read it yourself. Years passed by in sailing up and down the coast of China.

We lay in Shanghai one time, at the Upper Wharf, two hours from the city by steam launch that left four times per day. The very first night we got rid of our advance pay in Russian drinking places and, for the rest, stayed aboard. It was winter, the cabins were badly heated, at nine-thirty lights were out. Dinner was eaten in haste and shivering in the chill mess room. Nights were spent alone in the berth.

Each one lived alone in his cabin as in a cell. No one played cards. Each drank, secretly, the amount of gin necessary to keep him going. The amounts varied greatly. I did not need much, I merely stared at a piece of wood.

One evening, about ten minutes before lights out, an old shipmate of the *Glenmore* came to look me up. We grumbled and complained to each other as seamen do when they visit neighboring ships in port: about the cold, the poor food, the plundering that awaits us the moment we set foot on shore. There is a certain comfort in this complaining. You hear that it is no better, if not worse, on other ships. Then the lights blinked their warning, on and off, another five minutes. Jorgen proposed to go ashore again. He knew a place in the Chinese town where it was cheap, yet fairly honest. It was tempting, now that the deathly still darkness of the ship threatened, to go to a house with lights, though it was only false, red light. But I knew what the outcome would be, I had not a cent, and refused. Jorgen offered a loan, but I held out stubbornly. While talking, he picked up the *London News* picture.

"Don't you want to see Dolly again, she came from the St. George and is there now?"

What was that? I seized my glass, emptied it and collapsed; and when I came to it seemed to me that I had been gone for years. But Jorgen still sat there with the picture in his claws and repeated:

"It is, positively it is."

I tried to laugh: "That was cut out of a magazine a year or more ago, a countess, or something, I think."

"That may be. You know they will use a dancing girl with an attractive face if they can't get a picture of the countess herself. That's probably why these girls all call themselves baroness or countess. Well, a dancing girl can just as well become a sing-song girl. It is Dolly, she used to be in the St. George and is there now," repeated Jorgen stubbornly. "All right, maybe it isn't; let's not go."

But now I had to know. I pulled the woodcut out of the drawer. It was the first time I let anyone else see you. With that the light went out, and then, by the light of a match, it appeared again more clearly than in the full light. Jorgen stood up to stare. He was long silent; then: "The very image, positively she."

I was up the steps, Jorgen after me.

"Wait quietly below, it will be an hour before the last launch goes. A sampan would never make it with this tide."

But I had already called one, the only one that still lay under the landing bridge in the eddying water, and he demanded a dollar for the trip over. The old ferryman sculled us slowly across the broad stream, damp snow whirled into the hutch. Between whiles the lamp threw a fitful gleam on the yellow water. We drifted way down and came in three docks below the city.

Half an hour's walk; a half hour in the tram; a rickshaw through the concessions, and a chair through the Chinese town. It took hours. I suffered years. One behind the other we went through the alleys in the swishing chairs, to the grunts of the bearers and the screaming of the crowds that swarmed out of the houses into the streets. And all the way I asked myself: Could it be you? And would we cross the bridge? No, in God's name, not that.

But we crossed the bridge.

(White women, once in a house across the bridge, never return to European ground except to be buried there.)

We crossed the zigzag bridge, and Jorgen hurried the coolies. Through one or two more crooked, filthy alleys we came to a dark little square, unlighted but for a dull red transom in a blind wall. Beneath it was a low door, unpainted, the lettering half obliterated. The snow beat against the wall and slowly buried the beggars that crouched there with hands thrust out toward the late-comers.

We pushed in at the door. A gray-haired boy dozed on a chair.

Up four steep steps. A cold parlor, devilishly poor. On the rickety table was an album. Like one possessed I flung through the pages. One, two, three, twenty, thirty; you were not there.

"What's wrong?" cried Jorgen, seeing me slump down in my chair. Yes, what? I came to again. Was I sorry or glad that you were not there? Oh, Larrios, sorry; I wanted to find you and had waited for years. What difference could it make, whatever the place might be?

"She is not among them," I said, hoarsely.

"Just hand me that book," said Jorgen. "Here, you passed it by. There she is, look."

Then I had to find you! My hand shook over thirty-nine: "Here, this one"; and the old boy shuffled off.

We waited some time. Now and again I started up to run away, only to sink back in my chair. Jorgen saw my uneasiness. He said anxiously: "If only she is free. She has numerous clients. And it's the Chinese New Year."

My hand went to my right pocket.

"Here, give me that thing!" A struggle followed, and the boy came down. "Number thirty-nine can do."

I made an effort to go up, but could not get past the door. Jorgen helped me, hushing me, not understanding at all.

"Don't be a fool. Take it easy. I'll come for you in an hour."

I pushed open a door, stumbled over a screen, and there you lay, Larrios, in a kimono which you threw open as I came in.

I pulled it close and sat beside you, caressing your blue-black hair, muttering your name. Possibly you had forgotten your name and thought me drunk, so you sat and stared. Then I said: "Larrios, Burgos, Malaga . . ." but you began to laugh and recite a list of places: "Marseilles, Port Said, Colombo. Debt, sickness, work." Then again that hard, affected laugh. But I did not laugh. You nudged me. Still I sat there. Then came tears, a long fit of weeping. What for? Were you offended—in your calling, Larrios? I must almost believe it, because when I started to undress your face cleared. Did you think that I would use and then desert you? Why should I first have taken so much trouble to distress you?

It was very difficult. But it was still more difficult to make you understand that you must now take my clothes, my money, and leave. Take passage and wait for me in Manila. There you would be safe under American government. And when finally you understood and agreed, more amazed than ever I saw any other creature, then you thought I should still take you and I believe that you were angry and abashed that I would not, that

I hurried you on to dress, nor would you go without the solemn promise that I should have you, without cost, for a year in Manila. A thought did come over me that you had less in common with the old Larrios than the crude woodcut picture I had made of you. But I would find you again, Larrios, even if I had to do as you asked. A year—for nothing—I would teach you, gradually, to love again. I would surely unearth you again. How was it possible for a man to be so hopeful after eight years of wandering after a woman, after eight years of that life!

You were nearly ready and I was about to put on your kimono when there was a knock. You shrank back and seized my arm: "Don't open, don't open it."

Oh, Larrios, it was nothing; stranger things happen than this game of exchanging clothes. But you were afraid, afraid that you might not get away. I was glad of your fear; forgive me.

It was Jorgen who came to see what was keeping me.

He took it in at a glance, but was worried about me.

But I said: "I'll get out of it all right, go away quickly. Leave me your overcoat, Jorgen."

And they went. Such was the third time: a hurried, harried hour. The first was a glimpse from a train; the second, a night of exhausted sleep. And on these three meetings hung my wretched life like a broken bridge on unsound piles. Years long. I lay on that divan full of imaginings: now Jorgen is paying while she goes out ahead; now they are getting into chairs; now they are out of the Chinese district, thank God.

The door opened. An Irish sailor was let in. He did not betray me. A splendid joke, he called it, when I gave him some explanation, and he went on a door further.

But almost immediately afterwards came a Chinaman who found it no joke and raised a row, with so much noise that it brought the keeper and two servants to find me there. In place of a lotus of the house, an offscouring of the sea. The two servants caught me by the neck and the elbows. The keeper went out and returned with two coolies who carried bamboos, a brazier and tongs. Glowing coals were put into the brazier. Me, they bound. The keeper said I was under Chinese law here. He heated the tongs himself. I determined not to utter a sound, but when the tongs struck my flesh I let out a scream, repressed it for a moment but could not hold out, could not keep my jaws together.

Then the door was kicked open, the Irishman, two other white men and all the women of the house pressed in. One, two slashes with a knife and I was free. The Irishman shoved me out of the

door, the keeper and his helpers were jammed in by the press of women. Behind us we heard: "Banzaai, evviva, hurrah!" The outer door slammed, the Irishman had the idea to shove in front of it a heavy stone pulled down from the wall. We ran on, thrusting coolies aside, turning all the corners that we could. Behind us alarm gongs sounded; we tore on amid grinning, yellow faces and swinging lanterns. There seemed to be no end. Would we ever get out of it? The whole Chinese city was aroused for an hour. But we had to get out of it. We stood still behind a dunghill, no one was there as yet. Morning began to dawn. Three rickshaws came along, they had unloaded late callers at one of the houses. When they saw us they hurried over and dropped the bars at our feet. Thank God, they knew nothing of the hunt.

"To the Bund," the Irishman ordered the leader, and in an incredibly short time, through a couple of alleys, we were out of the gate and riding up the Avenue Edward, another world.

Where was I to find Jorgen? First of all I had to go into a pub with the Irishman for a drink, a drink to this mad joke, this narrow escape. Finally he had enough, half choked between laughter and whiskey. I saw him to his launch, my rescuer whom I shall never lay eyes on again.

Now to find Jorgen. Where would he wait for me? All the next day I strode up and down The Bund, resting now and then in a Russian tea-house in the narrow wayside park where the flotsam of the great city and of the ships is gathered: beachcombers, starved Russians, prostitutes who can no longer find work, and rickshaw coolies who can no longer run.

There I sat and waited. Would Jorgen never come along? "Larrios is off, out of it," I mumbled, to keep up my courage. Toward midnight I got up and went with a sudden certainty to the Alcazar to find him. He was there, sitting in a corner with other Norwegians. He saw me, got up and, pushing me into a chair, shoved a glass across to me. I drank. He said something to the others. They laughed and nodded approvingly. Finally I plucked up courage:

"Where did you leave her?"

Jorgen grinned: "At first she didn't want to go. But she's on board already. The *Susanna*. I know the captain. She has a good cabin. Sixty dollars. She may have to pay something more."

Now, for the first time, I remembered that she would have been fairly safe in European Shanghai. Why the mad haste? Now we are parted again. Why? I had wanted to get her away, far away from there.

Jorgen stared at me. "Cheerio, in a few days she will be among her countrymen. That's where you want her to be, she must surely have someone there."

How good it was to hear Jorgen say that! For now I knew why I wanted it. As long as she remained in Shanghai she was a prostitute. In Manila she would once more be a Spanish woman from Burgos, from Malaga.

"Do you know of any ship going that way, Jorgen?" I asked. Just as the first time, I had no money left with which to follow you. I gave it all to pay for your ticket.

Jorgen stared into his glass. Finally: "The *Long Shan* touches there sometimes, I don't know of any other."

I returned to my ship in the dark and kept the sampan waiting. In a few minutes my chest was packed. I gave the watchman a dollar, slept that night on Broadway, signed up on the *Long Shan* as quartermaster.

At noon we sailed out of the Yang-Tse. I stood on the deck, passed by the *Glenmore* with Jorgen on board, the *Elefanta* still lying in the harbor, paintless, half dismantled. I saw no one; no one saw me, standing on the deck of the *Long Shan,* sailing out the river to meet Larrios. We passed the cruisers lying in midstream: the Spanish, a small and dirty ship, with the flag at half-mast. It saddened me. Why?

Larrios, we sail to meet again. It will be months before we come into Manila. We did touch at Cebu, Mindanao, never at Manila, never at Luzon at all, or I should have attempted a trek overland from any port. Why was there never a cargo for Manila? Once we were under way but struck a typhoon, had to make shelter, and the load was dumped overboard.

And then I gave it up and became what I had never in my life been, a passenger, deck passenger at that, and sat for three days among Chinese and Filipinos on a hatch cover, staring toward Manila like a hadji toward Mecca. It stank, the food was revolting, the crew looked with contempt upon me sitting there. What did that matter? In my belt I carried one hundred dollars, which I would rather have given to Larrios than to some ship company. And as we sailed into the bay I felt like the governor, like Columbus.

Larrios, I had my own ideas of where to find you. Live you must; but I took it for granted that you would not live in the same way, on my account, on account of your wonderful escape. What remained? You could not sew here and you would have

forgotten how. Tap at a machine, or sit behind a desk—you could not do that, either. What else is there for a girl who has no one and will not give herself to everyone? I should find you on the dance floor, of that I was firmly convinced.

I started with Santa Anna, where there is a floor for three hundred couples at a time. For three nights I sat there behind whiskey. But I never saw you among the Filipinos who hold their mantillas while dancing, their arms, in wide sleeves, turned out from their bodies.

I sought further, in more and more obscure places, where it was more international.

During the day I rambled in the Intramuros and took shelter from the glaring light in the gray dusk of the cathedrals.

One Friday, after walking about for a long while, I went into the San Pedro to rest in a corner. And there, in the distance, in the tinted light near an altar I saw you kneeling close to a pillar and hastened along to embrace you, disregarding church and veil. But I looked into the frightened face of a stranger and fled from the cavernous church as if I had seen a ghost. For days I dared not enter a church; fortunately there are streets so narrow that a shadow hangs over them almost all day. The Intramuros is large, but I passed through the same streets as often as ten times. What else did I seek? Were you, all this long while, shut up here in some place from which I could not easily get you out? The days went by. I tramped the streets, muttering, demented, stared after, feeling my way with a stick. Or I lay against the side of a wharf, dozing, among beggars covered with ulcers that drew the flies, and discharged sailors who would never get another ship. Had I come to that? I did not know, would not try any more. Here I should stay, even if I rotted. At night I slept between bags of tobacco or rice—I don't know. Out of pity the coolies let me lie there.

One morning, hustled out early, I wandered through Manila in the early dawn toward that section of low hills where are villas, not seeing them, my eyes bent upon the ground, following the path. At a turn of the road I looked up to see a green terrace with beautiful flower beds, a pink and white house against the blue sky. I stood staring at it.

After a while some dogs barked. Had they been set upon me? No, they were held on leash by a woman, slender, in a dark dress, toying with the whip in her hand; in attitude and face, you.

It was almost fearfully quiet: we, in the open morning, the grass between us, the blue sky overhead. No train rushing me

onward, no ship to which I belonged, no house imprisoning you.

I had no need to hurry. This is the one moment, the place to which I have come over almost all the seas.

Slowly I went up the path, you remained standing above, looking elsewhere, not at me. Did you not recognize me, Larrios? But we were always masked!

You were about to turn back to the house but a gesture from me as I advanced stopped you. You let the dogs go, but they hardly stirred. One lay down immediately, the other padded around you. But at the moment I came close enough to see your eyes, you were even further away from me than when I followed you from sea to sea.

"Larrios, don't you know me any more?"

"Don't you see that I have changed, that things are . . ."

"You had changed every time. What is there in that? I expected that. Let me rest." And I wanted to come near her. Yet I had seen her eyes!

She took a step back.

"Don't you understand, you can't stay here like that."

I saw: in that house was another owner, more powerful than the poor Chinese keeper; he let her move about freely.

"Come back this evening, then I will return the passage money to you, get dressed, come back, perhaps . . ."

In two minutes it was over, with a few words Larrios died to me. Larrios who had lived in me for years. How can one outlive it, passing so swiftly? Truly, I had aged all those years as I went down the hill again. She, behind me, called out something more, but it was all over. I did not look back again.

I do not have to take my life. If tonight or a few nights later I lie in the forecastle of some nameless ship, a bit of filth amidst more filth, and the night and the sea surround the ship, is it not just the same, above all if I never land again, but lie under low beams, in a narrow bunk, mouldering wood at my head and feet, and above me, is not that the same thing as . . . ?

And if, the first night out, I bind a stone to a piece of wood that has been a part of me for years and let it fall from the half-deck—one, two, three, forever—is not that just the same thing as a rope for my neck or a bar of iron for my feet?

Let everything stay the same. What, actually, has been changed?

Translated by WILHELMINA C. NIEWENHOUS

H. Marsman

TERESA IMMACULATA

ON THE SECOND DAY OF MY STAY IN ROME I WAS ALREADY SPENDING the evening with Serra. I had first met him half a year before in a little village on the Lago di Garda. He was a lawyer just as I, but fortunately this did not remain our sole point of contact; a mutual predilection for the writings of Burckhardt supplied us with material for more than three days of endless conversation. Serra was older than I; I took him to be about fifty, a celibate possessed of a very un-Italian amount of circumspection. Even his gait was a bit dragging; he was heavy, his figure seemed to have sagged a trifle, and the weary monotone in which he spoke made one surmise that life had spared him very little.

As I entered, he led me through his study, which appeared to be higher and lighter than I had expected, to a balcony that looked down upon neglected gardens with ghostly cypresses, motionless and black in the autumn night. To reach Serra's house, I had had to climb the long flight of steps at the Piazza di Spagna and, as I entered his door, I reflected that he must enjoy a wide view of Rome from his dwelling. But his study and the balcony lay at the rear. On the far side of the gardens rose the dusky façades of supposedly empty palaces.

Serra guessed my thoughts.

"This Rome no longer exists," he said in his dragging voice; "and of what avail is impressive architecture when life is continually getting poorer and more oppressive, when there are no more people to live in the palaces."

I knew this tune. In Torri we had already more than sufficiently ascertained our points of view regarding the so-called decline of the times; to his romantic pessimism, my hope for the future had stubbornly replied with perspectives that had merely elicited a compassionate smile from him. The game of being able automatically to foretell his reactions had soon made me impatient, and I did not feel like spoiling our reunion. What prompted Serra to touch upon this subject again? I examined him more closely. He seemed to have grown older and wearier since the spring, and again I felt my youthful resilience to be

almost inconsiderate. He leaned over the railing of the balcony and stared out into the night.

After a moment he spoke.

"Tomorrow I have a difficult case to plead. It is an extraordinary case, which, alas, took a fateful turn several days ago, so that I expect a judgment that, to say the least, will be ruinous for my client."

It was the first time that legal matters had been alluded to between Serra and myself. So this was the question that even after my arrival had been occupying his thoughts! I begged him to tell me about the case. He continued immediately, as though he were rehearsing it all for his own benefit point by point.

"As to the facts of the case, they are very simple, and juridically too the case is of little interest, but morally it is of the greatest importance, of the very greatest importance.

"My client is a boy of not yet twenty-five, a lad of the people. He comes from a stonemason's in Rome, better say, in Trastevere. When he was three or four years old his parents died and he was brought up by his uncle, a smith, in Amalfi. His little sister, two years younger than he, stayed with her grandmother in Rome. I have received the impression that the boy spent an untroubled youth with his foster-parents. His uncle allowed him much free time and plenty of pocket-money. He fished and swam, rowed to Capri in calm weather, had his own garden on the hill, was a choirboy at the wonderful Norman cathedral of Amalfi and read whatever he could. But a special treat was always an excursion by way of Salerno to Paestum, where for hours he would in solitude enjoy the temples. I find him very appealing, a reflective and at the same time a generous nature, but with the scholastic obstinacy of the self-taught, who will not budge an inch in discussion and yet are receptive to every aspect of life."

"A fervent Catholic?"

"No, not fervent, but Catholic through and through, despite many doubts and in such an harmonious way that one is almost tempted to believe in the famous thesis that man is Christian by nature. And Gino, as the boy is called, really has still something of the fusion of heathen and Christian elements, such as one finds on the old murals of Orpheus and the lamb in the catacombs. Moreover, in his culture also he has completely remained the boy from Amalfi, simple and rustic.

"The strangest thing about him is his eyes, which usually search the world attentively, but sometimes in the course of a conversation become of a sudden defenceless, though if possible

still superior, and his gaze turns inward to escape to that irrational terrain which he certainly feels to be quicksand, but which nevertheless serves him as a last refuge. His voice has a very subdued quality, and his movements are so controlled that they possess an almost feminine coquettishness, yet at times they shift suddenly to an overburdened baroque. Nevertheless, if I did not know more about him, I should look upon him as a well-balanced person; but life has once again taught me how prone to change such an equilibrium is. And who knows with how much trouble he acquired it, with how much exertion of his stubborn will? For years he remained master of himself in this way, by modulating his passions and even suppressing them, still they unexpectedly revenged themselves upon this beautiful training and simply burned all the decrees of his will like scraps of paper. What can we do," he sighed in conclusion, "against the animal that we are?"

"Little," I said tersely. (Why did he always employ these generalizations?)

Serra was silent for a moment: disapproving or perhaps hurt. "Shall we drop ethics and philosophy, Serra?" I asked a moment later, "and continue with Gino? He interests me."

"He interests me no less," Serra went on calmly, "and not only because he arouses my sympathy and threatens my career, but because his life, despite your aversion to this sort of representative case, once again shows how powerless we are.

"When Gino was twenty-three, both his foster-parents died in quick succession, and at the same time the grandmother with whom Teresa had lived all these years passed away. The children wrote to each other; Gino had inherited a few thousand lire, felt no desire to continue the smithy and wanted to go to Rome. Teresa gave lessons in history and Spanish. They decided to live together and rented a few rooms in the oldest part of the city.

"Teresa's nature was completely different from that of her brother. In her grandmother's shadow she had led a religious and introspective life, but now, 'in the spring sun of my presence,' to quote Gino, she thawed a bit. But even after they had been living together for some time, and he teased her about the regularity with which she fulfilled her duties, she still went to church every day and often, while he was reading the paper or his dear 'Chroniques Italiennes' she would sit silently opposite him at the table all evening, engrossed with austere passion in her Spanish mystics, especially in her namesake, Santa Teresa de Avila, whose work she read over and over again with such con-

centration and rapture that she seemed to be discovering herself, and in San Juan de La Cruz. Gino tells that at such moments she herself resembled a Spanish nun.

"I have seen a picture of Teresa, a very good likeness according to him; an oval, handsome face which wears a mixture of diffidence and concealed spirituality as a mask for a turbulent temperament: in her eyes something of subdued ecstasy. During the years from which the picture dates, all her passion was still focused on her saints, but already one feels that it would not have taken much to make the flame strike outwards. It is possible that I now discover things in this photograph which I should not have seen were I less well informed, but unless I am very much mistaken, even without this knowledge I should have noticed that Teresa had a fierce nature which she conquered with difficulty. I have little sympathy with the theory that religious feelings are merely sublimated eroticism, and in the case of Teresa I have the impression that both eroticism and mystic inclinations were the desires of a nature thirsting for complete surrender. Her mouth is somewhat thin, not to say pinched, and all in all I am continually reminded of a bird that, afraid of its stormy desires for space and freedom, at first recalcitrant, but finally of its own free will, out of fear, locks itself up behind the bars of religious belief.

"Between Teresa and Gino there sprang up a love that was perhaps their greatest happiness but, in any case, also their fateful destiny. I really do not know whether people like us, who are free-thinkers in regard to morality too, can sufficiently imagine ourselves in their position; rather as far as I am concerned, I know very well that it is impossible for me. Completely imagine myself in the state of mind of a young woman who had a strictly Catholic upbringing, a reserved, passionate nature focused on the absolute, who was saturated with Catholic morality, and raised by a gruff, bigoted grandmother and no less bigoted nuns; who from her cradle had delivered up the secrets of her soul to priests; who ever since she could read had grown up with the lives of the saints and later with the mystics . . . and who then, with the awakening of love, must realize that for her this love would be inescapably bound up with a mortal sin because it was cherished for her brother? No, I cannot imagine it. But one thing is certain: she had to carry on a struggle which taxed her to the limit; and it was all the worse because at the same time she too remained convinced of the purity of her feelings. 'Before our innermost consciences we were innocent,' this sentence recurs again and

again in Gino's account of the matter; and still they doubted whether they should obey their consciences in the face of such a despicable inclination, whether they did not assume too readily that such consciences were a reliable compass. 'We deceived ourselves,' said Teresa repeatedly, 'that we might possess a sanction for our behavior,' but although she realized that the evil had already begun with desire, she clung to the notorious precept as to a straw, that they would not be completely guilty as long as they avoided the final act. These conversations, however, began only after it had happened. Gino himself calls them a labyrinth of sophisms and evasions; and how weak all this was compared with the silent struggle at the start, after they had discovered each other's feelings!

"For, as I have already told you, they combatted for a while their fateful desire. They avoided each other as much as possible. Gino arose early in the morning, roamed through the city, very seldom ate a meal with Teresa and came home when she was already in bed. But she would not yet be asleep, for hours she had been waiting to hear his footsteps. Only when he had gone to bed, could she hope to be safe. Once she noticed that he stood still in front of her door, hesitating as to whether he should enter her room, and with closed eyes and a pounding heart she had felt herself dizzily faint away with him.

"This tension lasted a month; resistance wore them down and intensified their feelings; through the endless weighings of pros and cons, moral control had lost its hold on their emotions and slipped away like a defective screw. One evening Gino, trembling with restrained tension, entered his sister's room and embraced her. After a weak show of resistance she allowed it.

" 'I myself,' said Gino, 'had become so profoundly familiar with the thought of it, I had already made her body such an integral part of my imagination, that even the first time was like a recognition: I also noticed nothing of the antipathy which one is apparently supposed to feel toward one's own blood. Neither did Teresa; no matter what she may later have said in desperation about the depravity in which we were living, she never denied the integrity of her physical feelings. But remorse obsessed her. Poor Teresa, she struggled, filled with despair, but she struggled in vain. She no longer recognized herself, and this was perhaps her most bewildering experience. Where was her tranquillity, her faith? At an enervating tempo she was torn between the most conflicting emotions. Sometimes she locked her room, and when I came home I found letters halfway up the stairs in

which she implored me to break off our relationship, but through the most horrible reproaches, against herself, again and again there glimmered something like desperate supplication and the fear of losing me entirely. After a few days her room would be open again and it began anew, more mysterious and seductive than before. For the more passion is satisfied, the more it desires.'

"Then Teresa became pregnant—several times they had feared it, but the fear always appeared to be unfounded—and just as, for her, the embrace had been the decisive step in the evil, so her pregnancy was the first earthly punishment for the evil. Now there was something much stronger within her than the feeling of remorse and self-accusation, which with all its intensity and all the physical agony it had caused still retained something abstract; now there was a little devil inside her, a goblin that had ensconced itself in her like a bloodsucker and that slowly grew and made her nauseated like a throbbing tumor. The somber visions in which she had seen herself and Gino condemned, sentenced to eternal damnation, faded away in the presence of the living being within her womb, that being which was the personification of the evil and which all its life would have to bear the curse of its creation as a stigma on its existence.

"The nights became unbearable, she hardly slept any longer. She had placed Gino's bed next to hers in her room, and when toward morning he finally fell asleep after perpetually the same hopeless conversations, she still remained awake and thought about the child: it would be an idiot or cripple and shunned by everyone because of its origin. Gino's proposal to have it removed she resisted with a sudden fierceness which reminded one of the old Teresa, a wild, desperate protest, in which, despite everything, her maternal instinct mingled with a desire to keep alive that which already lived, even if it were a cursed monster, and with a last remnant of moral strength to endure the full punishment. 'But the child will suffer no less than we,' Gino had once said; she, however, referred him to the Old Testament conception of vengeance, which visits the sins of the fathers upon their children, to the third and fourth generations. To interfere was to combat the evil with a greater evil. For that reason she also rejected Gino's urgent wish to leave Rome and set out for a distant country where they would live with the child like ordinary parents; and she was unyielding in her resistance; it was cowardice, after all that had happened, to want to escape from their fate and to make an idyll of that which already on earth was to be their curse.

"Their cup, however, was not yet full. Through Teresa's condition their secret, which had been suspected and slandered for some time, became an undeniable fact. Withdrawn into the twofold isolation of their joy and the approaching indignity, they proceeded to pay less and less attention to their neighbors, and this now avenged itself: like a running fire the dark secret spread through the street. And no matter how proudly Teresa tried to bear her disgrace, she sometimes felt as though she were being stoned. The women especially were without pity and flung the cruellest jokes at her.

"One evening when heavy and tired she had climbed the steps to her apartment, she saw a caricature of herself on the door (a halo around the head and with a monstrously swollen belly) with the inscription, Teresa Immaculata. These words so upset her that she seemed for the first time to realize the hopelessness of their position. That her name could be used to insult Maria proved to her how far she had gone astray. They were lost. Until now, despite everything, they had still hoped for salvation, but now she understood that her doom was irrevocable.

"That evening she threw her crucifix in the fire, with the books which had so long been her favorite literature. She no longer had a right to them, and besides, they had shown themselves to be impotent against the devil. 'I understood,' said Gino, 'that this signified the end for her, that life had now lost all its purpose and its value. But I could not comfort her, I did not want to restrain her, I could not do anything for her. The flames cast a reddish glow on her face while aghast she watched them slowly turn to ashes, as though she had burned them alive. But again I was powerless, I could do nothing for her. Slowly we began to drift apart, yes, almost to hate each other. Sometimes it even seemed to us that there was nothing left of our love except a strange, inimical emptiness. They say that misfortune deepens and strengthens love and unites estranged lovers. I did not observe this at all. No, on the contrary, misfortune at times as good as destroyed our love. But this happened, I now think, because fundamentally our natures were too divergent and especially because we had completely different ideas about the matters connected with our misfortune; and we were inclined—I at least was inclined—to blame the other more than myself. It seemed senseless that what had begun as, and what once had been, a mysterious joy now seemed a corrupt adventure. We were alone, each with a different despair and with a different accusation. We no longer understood each other. But when she did *this,* I realized

that for her the last stage must have begun, a condition of despair and misery that was beyond even my comprehension. How terrible to be alone, just in these matters, and after what we had lived through—alone in the same house. Sometimes when I saw her wild-eyed expression I even feared for her sanity; and now she sat there really like a dazed person, lifelessly staring into the fire. Thus our days passed by. I could not leave her alone; she had canceled all her lessons; our money slowly dwindled away. We no longer did anything: now and then she would review the whole matter again.

" 'The root of everything had naturally been her pride. She had refused to confess her dark desire, partly because it would not be completely true as long as she had not confessed it, partly because she did not want to have such a despicable feeling known. But this new sin of not confessing also turned against her; she had had the feeling, even before she was pregnant, that she was poisoned, physically too, because she no longer cleansed herself in the confessional and by repentance: she lived in a cesspool and suffocated in her own filth. Moreover, her belief had shriveled, it could no longer renew itself, now that it remained deprived of the Body of Christ.'

"To you and to me," continued Serra, "such a reaction naturally seems absurd, just as every belief resembles a primitive superstition for one who does not share it. But all the same there is enormous force in the conception that one does not have to attach a symbolic meaning to the Sacrament, that it is a real presence. However, let us not discuss theology; the condition of the poor children was already sad enough without this sort of complication. Yes, that was how they now lived, cut off from the springs of life, cast out by their environment, in revolt against themselves and each other.

"Finally the torture became so great that one evening they decided to end their lives: and now that the thought which had been pursuing them so long had once been expressed, any delay would have meant protracted agony. Teresa was no longer able to realize the sinfulness of the deed, or perhaps her realization of sin was suppressed by the tardy happiness of a joint undertaking.

"Toward dark they dressed themselves; mechanically she threw her short jacket over her shoulders and arranged her hair—'Why in God's name does a person, a woman like Teresa, still stand in front of the mirror an hour before her death?' thought Gino—and after they had closed the door as carefully as that of a sickroom, they quickly left the house.

"It was evening; they left the city; Gino carried a revolver, Teresa, the child. They walked apart and did not speak a word. On the Via Appia, close to the grave of Cecilia Metella, Gino took her by the hand, gently led her into the shade of a few old trees and kissed her. Teresa was pale but controlled. All the courage and pride she had possessed returned and steeled her. She went to stand opposite him like a royal lamb. 'Close your eyes, Teresa,' he said; and she shut her eyes and opened her mouth as though she wanted to receive the Host. He embraced her with his left arm, pressed her against him, put the barrel into her mouth and discharged the pistol. She fell backwards and dragged him down with her. He lay on her as though he had taken her in a struggle. Dazed by the shock, while his body covered hers, he pointed the barrel at his temples and fired. But his hand trembled and the browning missed. When he awoke, he lay in a hospital and slowly remembered what had happened. But Teresa was dead."

"And now?"

"Now he is going to be tried tomorrow. Only today I received a letter from him about the fatal turn his case threatens to take. If you will wait a moment I will read it to you:

" 'I must write you once more before the trial. I hope that my letter will not annoy you, but everything that you have done for me would prove to be ill-fated if the rumor which reached me the other day were true: to be precise, I have heard that there is a possibility of acquittal, or pardon, which amounts to the same thing for me. Despite my threefold misdeed, an atmosphere of sympathy and forgiveness toward me seems to have come into being, which wants to present me with a new life. As if this were not just the one thing which I find unacceptable, impossible.

" 'This aspect of the case has never been spoken of between us, and for this too I am grateful to you. I understood that you also silently accepted the fact that nothing else but death would follow. I counted the days, not expecting a reunion, the possibility of which I doubted, but because then at least something would be decided. Death with all its terror was my only mainstay in the nightmare in which I lived. If death had held no terror for me I naturally should not have missed my aim, even if I had not missed on purpose. An instinctive fear must have guided the bullet in this way. I often think that in my last seconds everything will be different from what I imagined—easier perhaps—but I find myself continually engrossed in this. In this respect my

nature is searching and restless. I am not so much thinking of infernal punishment as I am thinking of the death struggle; aside from the pain, it must be terrible when the soul is torn from the body. In my case it will be a long struggle, even if the execution lasts one second, because my soul is entirely interwoven with my body, and my will was concentrated on a long life. But after what has happened, I cannot and no longer want to live. I lack courage for a second attempt at suicide. I must therefore be condemned. I should still have been able to conquer my remorse if I had only killed her, because death in itself might have meant deliverance, but I had first driven her to mortal sin and then killed her in that state.

" 'Despite everything that I have told you about the last period of our life together, I know for certain, and now that I am alone I am more certain than ever, that for me life with her, even in the greatest depravity, is the only life. For it is not happiness that matters, but the strength of love; and although one half of my soul, in accord with the world and, what is more important, also with the church, unconditionally condemns the life I led with her, the other half of my soul knows that I can live a life of love only with her—and does not love justify everything? This is my dilemma, but in this dilemma I should like to live, I should like to bear it until the very end.

" 'Do you understand how much the news of a possible pardon has alarmed me? First came the warden, then the doctor, then the priest—each one wanted to be the bearer of the message of salvation, and every word was new agony for me, new fear. Is it not enough that I, after what I have gone through, have had to discuss my life with an investigating judge who considers himself a paragon of broad-mindedness, but, who just for this reason, thought he could at least demand a decisive answer concerning my "motives." (As though one lives according to motives!) Is it not enough that everything is going to be enlarged upon again the day after tomorrow at the session; by a tribunal which, God knows why, has made up its mind that I must be "saved"? I have often thought about this session, always with disgust. My only consolation is that it will all be so unreal in comparison with what I have lived through that I cannot become essentially involved in the matter. When I imagine how I will stand there and you will finally speak, forgive me, then I hear in advance that it will be different from our talks, that it will be falsified to make an impression upon a jury which oozes satisfaction with the

magnanimity it will soon display. I shall not recognize you in this.

" 'In any case, I am at the mercy of my fellow-men—and this humiliation is perhaps the worst punishment of all. I shall try to resign myself, but you can understand that sometimes I pace my cell for hours like a hunted animal and ask myself: what *devil* had this idea?

" 'I hope very much that you will forgive this letter. The only reason why I write you is this: please frustrate this criminal plan if it is still possible to do so; assure me of the death penalty. I know that it is not easy, but only if you advocate it do you remain till the end the friend who has risked his subsistence by defending me.' "

When Serra had put away the letter, I asked him hesitantly what he intended to do.

"I have decided," he said with circumspect conviction, "to comply with Gino's request. Let us not stop to reflect upon the duties of a legal counsel. Gino's wish seems so justified to me, I am so completely on his side, that I shall endeavor with all my might to convince the jury of the mistaken humanity inherent in such a pardon. But it is plain that I shall thereby gain for good the reputation of being an impious cynic and that this case ushers in the end of my career. The public, the whole city, is following the trial with the greatest suspense, and the disgust and consternation which will break out when I oppose an acquittal will not be small. People cannot well endure it when someone distrusts and thwarts their idealism, and in this case they are in advance so touched by their own humanity that their jury makes them swell with pride. Tomorrow a flood of holy enthusiasm and benevolent joy must pass through the streets of Rome, so that one may wallow in blood or in humanity, just as one used to do when the Christians were torn asunder by the lions."

Toward midnight I said goodbye and wished him luck.

"I fear the worst," he said with his sceptical smile, "when our enemies think they have to love us, we are usually lost. Will you call me up tomorrow evening? Ten to one he will be condemned to live."

Translated by JOSEPHINE VAN AS

E. du Perron

THE INDONESIAN CHILD GROWS UP QUICKLY[1]

I

MY GOVERNESS' NAME WAS KITTY WAHL, BUT TO ME SHE WAS "NONNA Dobleh": the lady with the hanging-lip. She had kinky hair and small black eyes and she was very temperamental and she preferred playing rough games with us—that is with Flora, myself and the native children in our own "yard." She would collapse in our midst, and then we would have to pull her up or walk on her until she came to. A pronounced Javanese accent caused her to speak Dutch with accentuated h's, as with a "blow on the gong," as it was called. Her mother, moreover, was Javanese and sometimes came to call on her. Out of respect for her, the governess asked leave twice a week to meet her in the waroeng of Po Sen, because in our house the woman would have felt rather embarrassed. My mother could do nothing but give in to such a delicate form of childish affection; but in the waroeng the timid Javanese woman would resolutely take the shape of a European sergeant. I was already acquainted with the picture of this sergeant, because my governess had shown it to me with some pride; because of my admiration for the military, I was the obvious confidant in this case. But when the servants told my mother about this metamorphosis, the governess was immediately dismissed. I have never understood why my mother was so fussy about the lack of sexual abstinence in those in whose care I was put; the only explanation she gave for it was that it would bring *sial* (bad luck). Shortly before Kitty Wahl left something strange happened within me: I thought, or perhaps I was only dreaming, that as we were playing she suddenly fell between us, that she sent all the native children away and then asked Flora and me to massage her, during which performance she was completely naked.

Of my sexual precociousness there was no doubt. A long time before this I had made friends with an Ambonese woman who had been married to a European and was therefore addressed as

[1] Fragment from the novel: "Land of Origin."

Mevrouw. She gave me the chromos of princes and Boer generals that hung in her house, every time I called on her, but that was not the principal attraction. She was no longer young and was as black as a Negro, but beneath her kabaja, which always was carelessly left open, hung two enormous black breasts. One day when she personally brought me back to my mother she said: "It is funny, Mevrouw, but do you believe it, that child has only eyes for my *teteh*." Grown-up people are in the habit of laughing with superior secretiveness at that kind of innocence. Perhaps a year later, a real European lady was staying with us, a stately fair woman who read a lot and walked with me in the garden. I lied to her about all sorts of childish fantasies, among other things that I always crossed the river swimming; she seemed to listen attentively to my stories and did not tell my parents about my lies, but called herself my "lady friend," which filled me with pride and was something no other grown-up person had done before. One day she was going shopping with my mother; the carriage was brought in front of the house, and my mother sent me to tell the lady that we were ready to go. She was not ready and, probably in order not to tell my mother about it but to return with me, she called me in and let me sit on a chair. As a knightly servant I witnessed the rest of her toilet. She went to sit in front of the mirror and soon she was naked to the waist; when she bent over I saw her in two different ways, that is, from the front in the mirror and from the side in reality. I had often seen my mother undressed, but I held my breath, did not say a word and took it all in, and up to this day I do not think I have forgotten the impression. She was pinkish white and must have been about thirty-five years old at the time; her high coiffure, black hair, the whiteness of her body and especially her breasts, and the complete naturalness with which she finished her toilet in my presence—how little perhaps does such a woman know what she gives in passing to a boy of perhaps seven or eight? I thought of her naked body when she had already been sitting for a long time next to my mother, in a smart dress. That same day she bought me a book, in which she wrote in tall characters: *For Arthur Ducroo from his big friend Mevrouw O——*. I never saw her again, at least not from nearby. Much later, when I was perhaps eighteen, she passed in a car, while I was standing with guests on the front verandah; there were two ladies in the open car, one was she, but both waved. What I caught in passing of her face did not correspond with my remembrance of her, but it was as if her waving was particularly directed at me. I had

forgotten that other people were standing next to me. If she had then stepped out of the car and I had pressed her hand, I would certainly have tried to retrieve the memory of my "big friend" and the secret of a past time. I really had everything necessary in order to be initiated by a "friend of my mother." Then it would not have happened as on that dismal evening, because the other was not there, and out of pride before my friends I accomplished the first amorous game with a native night beauty with a face like the back of a shoe.

If the theory is really correct that all our inclinations towards the other sex are based upon our first impressions, I was perhaps the dupe of the older women whom I continually saw around me during my childhood. A woman with small, high breasts always seemed ridiculous and unreal to me while, as a child, I experienced a sexual thrill at the tale of the *kelong wewe,* a female spirit with enormous breasts, who kidnaps children that are often later discovered sleeping in or under a tree and whom she has kept all this time as if under her wings, caressing and hiding them. In my imagination this spirit was not repulsive to me. Later on Catherine the Great of Russia seemed more desirable to me, as pictured in a historical book, than all the young women. These cerebral inclinations I have never followed in reality, but perhaps rather out of discretion than on account of sound reactions; an older woman who has some charm left seems even today in principle more attractive and engaging to me than a young one. The truth is, however, that few past a certain age still keep the necessary charm.

Yet when I was still very young I was already falling in love with young women. In Soekaboemi, near Wa Gedah, I met a girl, perhaps sixteen years old, who was called Den Boewah (Fruit). I have completely forgotten her, but the old Wa Gedah later on teased me that I had really been in love with her. I stayed around her, did not dare look at her when she looked at me and, when they drove me to her, I was supposed to have said with a great deal of coquetry: "No, I won't go with something called 'fruit,'" —plain marks of amorousness indeed. But at the same time I was mostly a quiet and serious child. My parents took me along on a visit to my uncle the general. He was a robust man with a deep voice, pouches under his eyes and grey, flowing whiskers, the type of the old growler; for me his uniform was an object of the greatest admiration. His wife, my father's sister, was an example of a sweet lady and gave me much lemonade while she quarrelled with my parents about the foolishness of teaching me to

recite "Our Father." Their daughter, then twenty-three years old was as pretty as a picture and played the piano holding me on her lap. My aunt said: "I never dare to talk simply to the child; he looks at me out of his big black eyes and then gives me an ironical smile, I tell you." "And when you grow up," she would ask, "what do you want to be?" "A naval officer." "And what will you do?" "I'll sink Uncle Jan." He was told about it and called out in a thunderous voice: "Then you want to sink *me?*" And I would hide behind a chair, scared to death and had to be comforted again with lemonade. The daughter walked through my room one afternoon and, as it was very warm, she simply undressed me and let me lie quite naked on the counterpane for health's sake. She really had less knowledge of human beings than my aunt. I hardly dared nor could protest, but as soon as she had left I called for Alima to dress me again as quickly as possible. Not ten minutes had passed before my big niece passed through the room again. "What? Is that child dressed again?" she asked. "Yes, nonna," said Alima timidly, "but leave him that way; he isn't accustomed to the other way, you see." Perhaps I was in love with the beautiful niece; the more reason for my prudish reaction.

Before we went back to Sand Bay, I would go to school again for a while. I must have been eight years old at the time, because I was too old to be a beginner and as the son of a gentleman I had to be guarded against bad company. I was sent to an institution run by Ursulines, where little boys of over ten were considered too masculine to stay or to be admitted. I was therefore already one of the oldest boys, but I felt very miserable when I was put in a class with the other children. My mother had told me that she would stay outside to talk with the sisters. At the first recreation period I realized that I had been fooled: I kept quiet and sat down on a bench; immediately a little blond boy with a sugary expression on his face came up to me and said in a bleating tone (I do not think that he meant to tease me): "Oh, what a sweet little boy!" These completely unexpected words robbed me of what remained of my dignity; I jumped up, and two sisters tried in vain to seize me. I ran out of the garden, across the street and into the barracks that were on the other side. The soldiers received me with cheers and laughter, and the sisters, who had followed me out into the street, quickly retreated. When I no longer saw them I called a sado and let myself be driven home. My return home filled the family with consternation and I was immediately taken back to school.

I stayed but a few months with the Ursuline sisters. I remember only a few things: that I said "Jah" in the clipped way that my father had, and that this was allowed when I explained that it was my father's way; and again that I spun stories for my preferred sister, Mother Jozefa, namely, that every morning I wrestled in the stable with my little native friends and that as true wrestlers they only wore trunks. In order to show her precisely what I meant, I drew the picture of a little man on my slate, about as I had seen it in a book. "But that is a grown-up man," said the sister, knowing the difference. "Yes," I said, "but that's the way I am." I was not punished on account of my fibbing, probably because the sister was enough of an educator to classify my lying as fantasy. I was, moreover, considered a hero in school and always chased the whole class in front of me on the playground. A little girl with fair tresses, whose pretty face I only then learned to appreciate, looked admiringly and dreamily at me from a bench. A sister suddenly grasped her by the shoulders and said: "Do you think it is right, what he's doing?" and she nodded with something like ecstasy in her eyes.

But soon our family would have to return to the wilderness, and so I acquired a new governess, who took me to school in the morning. I do not know why, but one morning I had the feeling that I had lost her. Quite upset I ran along the street in the hope of overtaking her and passed the "real" school not far from the Ursulines. A number of older boys stood at the gate; they shouted something at me and as I was running by I called out anxiously: "Have you seen my governess?"—at which the whole group burst out laughing. I was humiliated and at the same time I felt sharply that I would not be able to become a hero in that school.

The new governess' name was Bertha Hessing. She was tall and white and the only pure-blooded Hollander among all my governesses. At first she made quite an impression on me and when I became familiar with her, I liked her in a different way from the other governesses. She talked much more with me. I also looked upon her as the "big friend" and we had the feeling that we always had something to say to each other. She told Flora and me marvelous stories, which she invented herself, she said. In reality, they came out of her favorite book, "Adam Bede," with its characters disguised as princes and princesses: there was Prince Adam, a bad Prince Arthur, a Princess Hetty, etc.—that there was such rivalry between the two princes that it made the fairy tale more fascinating to me than all the others. Through Governess Hessing (who was not called by her Christian name

like the other governesses) I almost lost my belief in Santa Claus, about whose existence I had never thought much until then or whom I perhaps thought of as one Santa Claus among thousands of existing Santa Clauses. He now suddenly wrote to me a letter in purple ink, wherein I was told that this year I would still get presents but next year no longer, "if the little boy persisted in swearing so badly." The purple ink on the letter exuded a disagreeable smell, absolutely identical with the little bottle of purple ink with which Governess Hessing wrote her letters. But I solved the riddle by believing that the presents came from Santa Claus and the note from her in order to frighten me.

She went with us to Sand Bay and walked with me along the beach. In the direction of Tjimarindjoeng our walks were quiet and dark, as if we were going through a magic land. The other way was more populated; in the first place one passed the winged praus, the most primitive model of a boat, a small, roughly hollowed-out tree-trunk with wings of bamboo on both sides to prevent it from tipping over: the whole thing reminded one of a see-saw on dry land. Fish scales, and in places a small dead fish, lay here on the sand, and at set times the fishers would push their boats into the sea. When my father had brought over some of his Batavian sailors, I had looked with disdain upon these fishermen of Balekambang. Now, however, my governess and I were fascinated by their activities, while we gathered shells on the beach. She taught me to gather the beautiful ones and leave the ugly ones alone, let me listen to the roar of the sea in some of them and continued chatting with me. She told me about her fiancé who was in Singapore and showed me his picture: a very fine gentleman, I thought, with his hand upon his side and his small turned-up mustaches, and I had to call him "Uncle Edwin." "And what are you going to give me when I marry Uncle Edwin?" I promised her a box filled with shells, but those she could gather herself; then a box with postage stamps because she had to write so often. But if she did not write to Uncle Edwin, who then would be with her? By arousing my interest in Uncle Edwin and her marriage, she increased my jealousy. I cared so much for her that I neglected my mother. "You don't care for your mother any longer, you are in love with your governess," mother would say. And, with a kind of hatred perhaps against all "intellectuals," "And she is such a real *totoh;* she never brushes her teeth."

Miss Hessing left and was replaced again by an unadulterated daughter of the native soil, with a broad face, unbelievably long

hair and again a strong Javanese accent. Her name was Fientje Flikkenschild, and I right away took a dislike to her; she followed me everywhere as if I were a baby and she answered all my questions with her gong-beat accent: "That may be known to Joost van Vondhel." One day I emptied the half-filled chamber-pot over her hands; my father, who saw this, gave me the worst beating I had ever received. He beat me with the flat of his hand; he was so furious that my governess thought he was going to murder me. From that day on every close contact with him was a thing of the past: I ran away when I but heard his voice or saw him approach from a distance. I had always been afraid of him, but from that moment on I considered him as an evil spirit. My mother told me later that sometimes I would beg her on my knees not to tell something or other to my father; I don't remember that, but it may very well have been true. He beat me perhaps because of righteous anger, perhaps because of hidden anger against his coolies, perhaps out of chivalrousness towards my governess, whose hair was so long that it must have been a joy to his eyes. That, at least, was my mother's interpretation; she angrily took my part and did not rest until the governess had departed on a prau. She left probably the next day, after a stormy evening session between my parents, very poorly handled by my strong father. In order not to have to bid her goodbye, I had hidden in a new place, where the praus were stored away, near the Tjikanteh.

I discovered a new friend in the aristocratic Ading, a rather light-hued native of about twenty-four who wore his hair in a knot atop his head. He was the greatest rival of Moenta in the whole of Balekambang; less shrewd and articulate, but finer in appearance and lighter of color: from him I received at the age of nine my first lessons in sexology, in the same building where the praus were put away and where I had hidden myself when my most detested governess had departed. He explained to me what a man and a woman did (as an example he rather took a boy and a girl) who wanted "to form one body." When I finally understood what he meant, though I still looked at him unbelievingly, he said: "All the small boys in the village who go bathing do it with their little sisters." Then he enlarged upon the subject by comparing both of our persons; the difference was really startling in many respects. "But can't two men ever do anything together?" I asked, and it was surely less from an evil inclination than from the fact that I had never given up the idea that my mother was like a man in this respect. "Yes," he said, "but it is

very difficult and would be very painful." I did not at all have the personal friendship for Ading that I felt for Moenta, and it was quite by chance that I sat that afternoon with him in that building. One day the rivalry between him and Moenta took on such proportions that both drew their knives; their fathers came running, Isnan, I think, with a rifle, and perhaps it was this that prevented a disaster. Ading was the oldest of four or five brothers, some good-looking, some ugly, their faces pockmarked. After his instructions, I understood what my father meant when he called him one day to tell him that he and all his brothers would have to leave the premises, because they only knew how to work with one instrument (and he named it).

I do not believe that there was much perversion in Ading's opinion that I should know about certain things; his answer on the last question proved that, unless it was that he was afraid "to injure a child of white parents." But I found another teacher in Kiping, the foreman of the Batavian sailors; Kiping told me fairy tales in which such matters were treated in the simplest manner. A fairy tale would start for instance: "Once upon a time there were a man and a woman who liked to form one body together [*la bète à deux dos* of Rabelais] and who had many children in consequence." When sexual matters shocked me, it was usually not the natives who were responsible; in their teaching, absence of tact was excellently replaced by complete naturalness.

II

From now on I received instruction from my father. The governesses were no good; he would do it himself. He had therefore gone to a teacher who had given him a list of all the books that were used in his school. The rice-hulling works were now active, and every morning before he went there he gave me a lesson. It was my good fortune that I was not mentally lazy, because in that case he might have mistreated me and then left me to my fate. He instructed me in everything: Dutch, history, geography, arithmetic—and while he was in the factory he let me do a lot of work by myself, and in the evening when he came home, no matter how tired, he would go over what I had learned, looked into what I had accomplished. Because of this persistence alone he deserves my gratitude; as I got to know him later on, with his hatred for schoolteachers, his anger and his pent-up irritation with the Sundanese, I am surprised that he gave himself so much trouble. Sometimes he would throw books at my head and called

me a triple ass, but he kept at it, and for him it must have been worse than for me, though I considered him a tyrant and a schoolteacher and as a teacher, a tyrant too. My mother sometimes tried to intercede and asked him to give me less work; he should not forget that he was giving me private lessons, etc., etc. As a reward he lent me books, most of which I had already read in private. Two or three of Walter Scott, those that were less chaste than the others, he eliminated; I read them in the same way I had the others. I searched all the boxes and closets, when I could no longer find any books of my own to read, and one day discovered a catalogue of semipornographic literature with illustrations; in one of them a farm boy tried to overpower a girl on the grass and beneath it it read: *Oh, Tony, if your mother only knew!—Don't worry, she knows more about it than you do!*—This illustration remained a mystery to me, in spite of all the natives' revelations. What did mother know better? I asked myself. Why did that boy struggle with that girl, and on what occasion would my mother have had to struggle like that?

Sometimes my father called me to him outside of lessons, as formerly when I was allowed to play with his watch chain. But it was no longer the same; since he had given me the beating, he remained my enemy. Once I sang what I had to read, a little verse from a reader, because I happened to know the tune. My mother heard it and said: "You must read it." To my surprise he said: "No, let him sing it." I did not trust this either; I felt that my mother was right and that I was betraying something when I sang for my father's pleasure.

During my free time I organized a troupe of native playmates. The most important ones remained the children of the stable boy, Enih and Entjih, a boy and a girl. The girl was very imaginative and played "house" with my books; we could even construct houses of several stories; cut-out dolls were ladies and gentlemen calling on each other. Enih made up great stories of what happened between the Ducroo family and the Rengers family whom her father had served before. My imagination soon excelled hers, I thought that I had really been acquainted with the Rengers family, especially "sinjo Rentie," the son, who was at least ten years older than I and whom I only knew from Enih's descriptions. I told her in all seriousness that I had had all kinds of adventures with him, that I had even once been with him hunting for *tjoeliks* (kidnappers). "And did you shoot too?" Enih asked, sneering. "No, but I walked behind him and was allowed to carry his gun."

When I became older and began to awaken sexually, I imagined that I was in love with Enih; this too started with dolls; she had to be a doll herself now, though it might have been a lady from a fashion catalogue, and the other doll was myself, and these two dolls I married in spite of her laughing protestations. One day I proposed to her to marry her really; she understood immediately what I meant but remarked that there was nowhere a place to perform the ceremony. I proposed all kinds of places, including a pit on the beach; she told me then that it was impossible because I was not circumcised and therefore was on the level of a Chinese to her. The great contempt in which the natives held the Chinese convinced me right away, but also the contempt I meant myself to have for the Chinese: that Enih did not want me as if I were a Chinese to her seemed irrefutable to me in logic.

That I was in love was self-evident: all the knights in Walter Scott were so and ended by marrying. I was even violently in love with an illustration, showing Isabelle of Troyes who held out her hand to be kissed by Quentin Durward; the presence of the kneeling Durward did not interfere with my love in the least, for I identified myself with him. Perhaps I felt myself in this manner represented by one of the heroes in every book I read. But sometimes the choice was difficult: in "Ivanhoe" and "The Talisman" but not because of the presence of Richard the Lionhearted, since without hesitation I chose Ivanhoe and Sir Kenneth as the younger ones, who did marry in the end; in "Guy Mannering" I was in a quandary because the hero of this tale became old and I had to wait for young Bertram who showed up for the first time in the middle of the book and whom I considered the real hero. In "The Fair Maid of Perth" (one of the books I was not allowed to read) the choice was the most difficult: Henry Gow, the smith, was without doubt the hero and did indeed marry the beautiful girl, but he had a full-grown beard and was thirty and that made him old to me; I felt already much more attracted by the illustrations of the two beardless young men, Conaghar and Robert of Rothsay, but the first had been beaten by Gow as a child and the second did not fight at all. From Walter Scott I derived a manner of looking at life which I wanted to be confirmed in each volume; before I started one, I would ask my father: "Who is the hero? Who is his friend? Who is his enemy?" Even the finding of a real friend or a real enemy was sometimes rather difficult.

In Soekaboemi, where I had cried over a book for the first

time, when I read "A Schoolboy" by Farrar, which my father himself called a "magnificent book," he said to me: "And don't you think that somebody must have suffered a lot, to be a good author?" I was completed bowled over by the idea; that there was some relation between the author, probably a gentleman like others, and his heroes had never occurred to me, but such a sensitive remark, coming from my father, made me think. From that time on I began to look for the author's suffering to appear through the book; I even found it in a book about Indians: the death of an old beaver hunter, a passage which I read to my mother with a lump in my throat but which left her to my great surprise and chagrin unmoved. Even Scott gave me little satisfaction in this direction, as little as my other favorite author, Captain Marryat; but another "magnificent book" which I received on my birthday, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," reaped a rich harvest. Strangely enough, whether because of my father's sympathy with Uncle Tom and his antipathy for Legree, I did not for a moment compare him to the slave driver.

When Enih had rejected me, I felt I had to look for love elsewhere. I remembered the European girls I had known at school in Soekaboemi; I hesitated between a girl who was a few years older than I was, who was skinny but who had magnificent black curls as some of the heroines of Walter Scott or another who was about my age and with whom I had played hide-and-seek in my father's club. I chose the latter as the better possibility because she was about my age and her name was Polly. I told Enih about her and tried to convince myself, by pronouncing her name with a great deal of emotion when I was along. But two *koetjiahs* (professional actors) who came to live in Balekampang, and each of whom had a wife, offered me greater reality: I again fell in love, this time in deep secret, with a living woman, starting with one whom I thought better looking at first, but her chewing of betelnut repulsed me: then with the other, who attracted me on account of her white and unfiled teeth.

With the native boys I played tag, but I always identified knights' tales with the names we called each other—Ivanhoe, Kenneth and Richard, something the native boys considered rather odd; later as I was reading a book about lion hunters I wanted to change the names and wanted them to call me Marandon, but they protested, because they found the old names easier and had become used to them. In reality their names were Entjih, Hatim, Snoeb, Ahim, etc. Ahim was a fleet-footed, dark boy, who was on a footing of greater equality with me than the others. His father

had given him instruction in Pentjah, which was a mixture of fighting and dancing; one day I proposed to him to try his skill on me. At first he refused discreetly, but I forced him and took hold of him. Within five minutes perhaps he threw me down twenty-one times on the sand, but once I half pulled him along. Every time I fell, all the other children, boys and girls, would jump up and down and about. Finally I was dead tired and bathed in perspiration, but more surprised than humiliated; I never lost the idea that all would change when we fought seriously and that then I would beat him instead of only pulling at him. But my personal prestige had suffered with the others, I was now only their superior as the son of a blanda. Later, when Ahim had gone, Entjih told me maliciously that he had said I was a real blanda, because all the time I had smelled like a *andjing basah* (wet dog).

The father of this Ahim was called Pa Sahim and was probably crazy. Once three coolies ran away but were caught by Isnan on horseback and brought back. They sat on their haunches in our yard, all three next to each other; my father scolded them and afterwards beat them up separately: the first two, who did not resist, each received a few blows and nothing more, but the third, who jumped up, was beaten in a manner that looked rather like a wrestling match. I had seen all this ever since I was a baby, but now that I saw my father on top of a native who had lost his headcloth and was pushed against the ground, I experienced a sexual manifestation to which I did not pay any attention. My feeling at the same time seemed to come from fear and exaltation. While my father was beating the third, Pa Sahim came running out of his house and suddenly gave one of the two other coolies, who were again sitting on their haunches, a blow in his neck from behind. My father immediately let go of his victim and shouted to Pa Sahim that he must go away; the man stood facing him, strong and thick-set, and looked with his red eyes into my father's. I thought later on that the scene might have ended in a murder; if my father had not controlled the other with his greater will power, if the other had pulled out a knife, my mother and I might have seen him murdered in a few seconds by the four natives; it is not impossible that they might have thrown themselves upon us afterwards—such things have happened in just this way. But the men left, and the three beaten ones followed him; my father went to lie down on a couch where my mother brought him some tea, uttering soothing words. What would I have done, I then thought, if I had seen my father being

murdered? I think that I would have immediately run away, through the kampong, straight to the spot of the Tjiletoeh, to hide away with Kiping and the Batavian sailors. Or would I have defended my mother?

Another time, when Ahim did not want to play with me, I went to call for him at his home. He was busy eating, facing his father and with his back towards the door; half angry, but partly too in joke, I pulled him from the bale to the floor, before he had seen me. He refused to come along, and his father began to roar as I had never heard a native do before; I left in order to tell my father. While I crossed the bridge over the Tjikanteh, because the coolies' habitations were on the other side, I could still hear the man plainly shout: "Go ahead! I'm not afraid! I'm not afraid!" When I had come back to our own house and had told my parents the story, I was called down, but for a moment my father seemed inclined to go towards the upheaval which could be heard in our house also. Perhaps he might also have been murdered that time. But my mother kept him back with the argument that the man must be insane, that one could see it in his eyes. Some days later he was sent away and thus I lost my comrade Ahim Foo.

In spite of these things, my father's behavior towards the natives did not please me at all: I experienced it like fate, but I shivered as soon as something of the kind reoccurred. My mother sometimes warned me that I ought to go away, that one would surely get a beating again. My friend Moenta, Don Juan that he was, was given a beating too, after which he ran away; this caused me to hate my father anew. Once he beat an already aged, rather fat man from the village, who fetched our mail from Pelaboean with the winged prau. Probably the man deserved it, because he had probably opened a registered letter to see whether there was any money in it, but that afternoon I seethed with pity and indignation. Like a reflex movement I ran back to my room and broke open the penny bank wherein my mother sometimes put a dime: the result was about one guilder. I knew for sure that my mother would not scold me, but I was mortally afraid that my father would see me: bending myself up double behind the *djarak* hedge I had to run hard to catch up with the man. He was stumbling along, busy putting on his sarong and fastening his headcloth. When I had caught up with him—it was already between the two hedges in the kampong—I hastily gave him the money and then slunk back with beating heart along the shrubs that were to hide me. I buried this "noble deed" as well

as my feelings of vengeance, almost like unreasoned impulses and nothing else. I had again experienced such an impulse ten years later when I was a young reporter on the *Nieuwsbode* at the Kali Beasar at Batavia: on a suffocatingly hot day, as I was waiting for a street car to take me home, a native came to stand in front of me with an unpainted table which he offered me for sale. I asked him whether he perhaps thought I could take the thing along in the street car; he looked at me beseechingly and said in an almost toneless voice: "For one guilder, sir, for whatever you think it is worth"—and with a gesture indicating his mouth: "I am so hungry." There was famine at that time in the Buitenzorg region. I had hardly half a guilder in my pocket and the same reflex motion occurred; I shouted at him to wait and ran as fast as I could over the bridge of the Kali Besar, back to my paper, because I might still find the chief copy-reader. I found him there and asked him for a guilder; then I ran back and found the native, who was waiting. All that time I had one fear: that he would have left because he did not trust me. When I sat in the street car, which luckily was just passing by, I felt myself unutterably happy and yet I was astonished at myself.

Later on, like all Indian boys, I beat the natives myself; especially the *sado* coachmen whose backs I have often poked with my fist so that they might drive on when they refused. But all this came from a misunderstood conception of sportsmanlike behavior, following the example of others, without much conviction, and once even, after I had boxed a native's ear and sent the man away without another word, with a strong feeling of humiliation and pity, furious with myself because I only had one urge: to find the man again and apologize to him. On the contrary, at Tjitlengka, when I was seventeen, I fought with the house boy Piin who refused to obey me while my parents were away. He was unusually tall for a native and had manifested a sneering laziness towards me for a period of weeks; I now jumped up from the table where I was eating and followed him into the hall to give him a slap; he turned around and seized me and we rolled over each other in the hall until we bumped into the wall. I put a scissor-hold on him exactly as I had seen my father do, his headcloth came off, and I would have been able to beat him because he had suddenly ceased defending himself. But I did not do so; I pushed his head against the wall, got up, smiled and let him get up; because I had not given him a beating I went with a pleasant feeling back to the table again. He continued serving me, and when my parents came back home neither he nor I

spoke about what had happened. Since that time he flew to execute my orders and paid all kinds of attention to my wants. One day I cut my ankle to the bone with a sort of short saber and limped inside with my slipper dripping with blood and he ran towards me, his face ash-grey, to support me. It was a short saber attached to a stick; I had just purchased the weapon and he had sharpened it to a keen edge for me, which was perhaps the reason, but that sort of pang of conscience seemed too subtle for me in a native. What a magnificent subject for the Freudians: the "link" between master and servant after the beating. I should have liked to have seen my father's face if I had asked him for his thoughts upon feelings of this sort.

I shall come back to the subject of Pa Sahim and Balekambang. The man was perhaps not insane, but certainly cruel. One day Isnan shot a *binjawak* (small alligator) in the Tjinkanteh. It was still alive when brought ashore. Pa Sahim put his hunting knife between the jaws and split it apart like a piece of firewood uttering a sonorous "Ha!" at every new blow, and with every new blow the mouth of the animal continued to open, though it had already been split open to its stomach. That sort of thing seems amusing to the natives. When Otto came to us in Balekampang, he shot a *loetoeng* (black monkey) for his collection; the animal was brought home while it was still alive. Moenta came to me and said: "Go and look at the *loentoeng* your brother has shot, a *loentoeng* is like a human being, when he is in pain, he cries." I went to look at the animal, which was lying down; it moaned like a human being and had indeed tears in the remarkably human eyes. I became very upset and went with tears in my eyes to my mother, asking whether the animal might be kept alive. She was afraid not; moreover, Otto wanted the skin for his collection. During the night the moaning body was brought to the adjoining buildings. The next day, as soon as I had gotten up, I went there; the animal was still alive, I scratched its head cautiously, I gave it my hand, which it clutched anxiously. Isnan appeared in order to skin it. I protested, saying that perhaps it could be kept alive.—Nothing doing, he said; he had received orders to skin it, and he let it be taken away. I went everywhere to find my mother, but she had gone for a walk with Otto and my father. When they came back the *loentoeng* had been skinned. All day long I did not speak to them; I would have despised myself if I had spoken to such people. But the most painful thing was told me by my playmates: the *loentoeng* had been skinned alive; when he was without skin, he was still moaning, and only

then, said either Enih or Entjih, their father the stable boy had cracked his skull with his hunting knife.

I am trying to discover the old pain while I am writing this; but there is nothing . . . it is past or the action of writing it down has replaced it. Years later I thought back upon these things and found again the same intensity within me the feelings of pity and hatred; I have sometimes dug up the story for my mother in order to punish her because she did not prevent it. The *loentoeng* hide hung for less than a year in Otto's collection; he himself was sorry that he had shot the animal, but perhaps only because he had not hit it in a better spot.

This incident drew me away from Isnan. I really did fight at Balekambang with two adult servants when I was a child, namely with Isnan and Pieng, the cook. Pieng was perhaps merely hysterical; she gave vent to this in abundant shrieking when I had done something wrong to her daughter, my playmate Amsah. This wrong was never of a serious nature: she received a ball against her foot as we were playing nine-pins or I would say that she looked a sight (she had then been chewing betelnut, something I could not bear), having prettified herself for the benefit of one of the Batavian sailors, Normin. When my parents were at the factory at the time, Pieng came to bawl me out. I felt the urge to fly at her, though she was an old woman, but soon I succeeded in wounding her by words and that was much better: she would again escape into the kitchen, and there between her pots and pans she would shriek and in the mean time beat her breast and not quite but almost pull out her hair. I then opened the small door leading to the adjoining room, where Isnan was busy sharpening the knives, and said: "Look at this foolish woman." His facial expression remained indifferent, but in reality he enjoyed the spectacle. I do not know in the least any more all that I said, because my childish psychology may have taken a strange turn. Isnan said to me: "Allah, but you have a sharp tongue!" as if I were battling him. It was a good thing that I was able to use my tongue against this man whom I could not touch in any other way. He was the great animal destroyer in our house; he shot cats and dogs considered dangerous to the hen roost, and one day when he caught a dog in the chicken coop, he broke its back with a bamboo stick. The animal howled horribly; I heard it and ran up: there was a mix-up between the animal that lay howling but powerless in a corner on the ground, Isnan with his bamboo stick, and I who ran between Isnan's legs, flew at him and pushed and pulled wherever I could, all this happening in

the small enclosure full of chicken manure and feathers and with the door locked. That the dog did not bite both of us is a wonder. Isnan pushed me aside, almost knocked me down, as he finished the dog with his bamboo stick. I shouted: "Wait, Isnan, when I am grown up I'll treat you in the same way!" I hated him at that moment more than I ever hated Bapa Tjing.

Those animal stories are in my memory the most moving episodes of the time we stayed in Balekambang. In the back yard was the chicken coop, so that the chickens were everywhere, even sometimes in the house; nowhere could one be absolutely sure that one would not step in some chicken manure. But they furnished meat and eggs, the only variation from fish, because the cattle were seldom slaughtered here. The rare times we were given buffalo meat we had to be very careful to find out whether or not the buffalo had perhaps been sick. We had buffaloes ourselves; they were common grey ones with a few albinos mixed in, on whom I preferred to ride after my little friend Sanoeb had taught me how to climb onto them. My mother's favorite cow, Sajati, had no horns and had pushed me into the mud of the river, but the buffaloes with their large thick horns went on dumbly and placidly with Sanoeb and me on their backs. At home I had a chick that ran around peeping, even over my books, but it was one day stepped on by a mysterious stranger; with unutterable sorrow I buried it in the garden next to the place where they weighed the grass. One day my little friend Hatim gave me a *perkoetoet* that had been reared in the coolies' house of his parents; I proudly put it in a cage and asked Amsah to feed it at the same time as my parents' birds, but a week later it had perished from hunger because Amsah had forgotten about it. It was at the time when my father had overwhelmed me with work so that I had no longer paid any attention to it; when I saw it dying and my mother discovered the reason, I was furious with Amsah but also with myself. The fact that the animal had grown up in Hatim's poor surroundings, that he had fed it from his mouth, and that it had to die in this manner in our well-to-do house, gave it the melancholy quality of a fairy tale, but this aesthetic consideration sharpened my pain instead of lessening it. I could have let Hatim beat me if he had consented to do so. But he took it quietly; he had a stupid face with large protruding teeth. After the death of the chick my mother gave me a large yellow rooster who would not have been in any danger of being trampled to death. He was only mine in name, because that is the only way I could claim him, only rarely could I carry

him around for a moment. But from this rooster I derived nothing but pleasure: at one time Otto had sent my mother half a dozen fighting cocks, all with shaven combs, and mine, who still possessed his comb, chased them all away. I had vague plans for declaring him a fighting cock and winning bets with him, and the *koetjiahs* even made me the proposition, but this right away showed that he was only mine in name.

The one that really belonged to me, though in name he was my father's, was the fox terrier Loulou. He was, on account of his race and color in the midst of managarie, a real white man's dog, domineering, energetic and unafraid. As his mate Lili had died, he lived in our yard with his daughters, which did not prevent him from exercising his *droit de seigneur* in the kampong among the more common canine breed. He fought ceaselessly and was always the winner; the villagers respected him because he was an *ardjoena* among dogs. Sometimes, however, he came home with damaged skin, once in the middle of his forehead; it was so neat, so deep and so round a hole, that I could not understand that it had not run into his brain. My mother dressed his wound and nursed him with *kojoepetih* and iodine just as she did with the wounds of the natives. When we played tag, Loulou was always present: though he obeyed my father implicitly, he would go around in circles when my father and I whistled for him at the same time and would end up by coming to me, though with a shrinking-back in fear of my father. My father would sometimes beat him with the whip; not I, I wrestled with him, pulled his ears and would lift him high and then drop him to the ground, but it was all in fun. A childish cruelty towards animals did exist in me, but it did not go very far; I teased the animal in order to pity it afterwards. We also had many cats, almost every one of them tri-colored, whom I took to bed with me in turn. My way of teasing cats consisted of throwing them softly against the rug that hung from the wall, so that they would fasten themselves to it with their claws high above the ground; they would hang there mewing pitifully and not daring to drop down, and as soon as they would risk it I would renew the game. When they tired out, I had the feeling that now I could spoil them. I only remember this naive kind of sadism from the time we were in Balekambang, though later too I always took cats to bed with me.

The fox terrier had a furious dislike of monkeys. A little past the cow stable was a pond covered densely with green, dark green, behind a curtain of lianas with white flowers; when he came here Loulou would start to bark as he trembled all after-

noon, because he smelled the monkeys behind it, whose presence we only noticed by the soft creaking and swinging of the branches. One afternoon I went to one of the coolies to look at a monkey just caught. The animal sat on a stick, making fearsome little sounds like the chirping of a bird. I had forgotten Loulou, who stood behind me looking up at the stick while trembling; the small monkey saw him and clung to me for protection like a child, but with one jump Loulou caught it around the middle and dragged it along through the garden. It happened so fast that nobody realized it, but I quickly got a hold of Loulou, beat with my fists with all my might on his ribs and tried to pry his jaws apart. But he stood as if rooted to the floor, until he had become sure that he had bitten the monkey to death; then he dropped it disdainfully. It was dead; a little bit of blood ran out of its nostrils. I took the little corpse along, with Loulou suspended from his collar in my other arm, and when I came home I tied him, put the little monkey down on the floor in front of him and beat him mercilessly with the whip until he whimpered softly. Still afterwards I went in a desperate state to the beach: if I had wanted to balance my sorrow at the time by a deed, I should have hung Loulou.

He died of hydrophobia. For a few days he had been wandering around grumbling and had become listless, and I had sometimes pulled his ears, taken him up and dropped him. He would go away then, somewhat uncertain on his feet; my father noticed that he was not well and let him lie down in a cool spot on a chain; there he lived for two more days. I was not allowed to come near him, but my father went to look at him daily and patted his head. When he left, Loulou looked at him with glassy eyes. "A harmless hydrophobia," said my father; "good dog, he did not even think about biting any of us."

I still ran a few more dangers from animals, not only danger from cockroaches and centipedes, at the thought of which Dutch women shiver when they think of the Indies. Every day I saw cockroaches at Balekambang. Some snakes had even been slain in our yard. But one day when we were playing at hiding our handkerchiefs, I reached with my hand into an empty birdcage, when Enih suddenly gave a yell. Like a green arrow a *boengka laoet* shot out from under the tin roof of the cage, a snake whose bite is mortal. Another time when the bridge over the Tjikanteh had collapsed, Entjih and I rowed people across in a small prau. As we came back, we were attacked by wasps at precisely the spot where there was a crocodile *kidoeng*. We beat around us with

our paddles, but the crocodiles attacked us so furiously that our little vessel was upset and we lay in the dark water above the *kidoeng*. Otto had already taught me to swim; I was therefore not afraid of drowning, but more afraid that time than when the snake had shot out of the cage. Entjih and I swam to the shore, leaving the boat and the paddles. I thought of the woman Djassilem and already felt the crocodile's teeth in my leg: afterwards I was often obsessed with the idea of what one would feel exactly if one were dragged along under water by a crocodile; henceforth I included the following in my evening prayer: Especially do not let me be killed by a crocodile.

And then there was the glorious day when father came home with a tiger—but he had not shot it himself. The animal had been lured in the usual manner with a goat that had been half eaten; a lantern was hung at the spot, and my father and the Loerah *preman* (a freeman, ex-village head) sat in a tree until it would come. My father had taken along the newest rifle of his arsenal, a double-barreled gun, the Loerah *preman* his own old rifle, perhaps one of the first breech-loaders that had been imported to the Indies. When the tiger came hesitating into the circle of light, the native nudged my father; he twice released the catch and both his cartridges missed fire. The other, who had politely waited for his turn, then shot, and the tiger fell without further ado. He was skinned and this time I went to the prau shed to look at his skinned body. He looked strange but still like a tiger. The villagers came in groups, each to buy a bit of tiger meat; according to what Isnan said, not to eat but to use as medicine. The head through which the bullet had passed was boiled in a large kettle in order to be able to give my father a clean skull, and the water became a strong brew with large circles of fat floating on top. The skin was stretched along the back wall of the back verandah, smelling foul for months.

The only time that my father and mother were away and left me in the care of Alima, I had the feeling of being king. I let the *gamelan* be brought in at night in the living room and Moenta had to give a *wajang*-presentation for my benefit; I let Enih dance with flowers in her hair, and I, who later on never wanted to learn European dances, shamelessly danced along with my native friends. I almost emptied my father's book box on the sofa and during the day I read until I got a bursting headache; Alima, Ma Oemih or somebody else had to massage it away. During the early morning I was called from my bed because a giant turtle, such as had never been seen here before, had been caught

on the beach right in front of our house. I hurried there in my nightgown and on naked feet; the sun had hardly risen and it was cold on the beach and a large number of fishermen stood around the caught animal. It was really enormous, and a little bit beyond, it had laid a number of eggs which also seemed three times as large as the turtle eggs I had seen before. The natives spoke about dragging the animal to the village and butchering it there. At the moment I thought that this was what would happen, when a boy with a stick injured the animal's eye. I then immediately ordered the rope to which it was tied to be cut. The turtle slowly crawled towards the surf and then went in a stately manner into the water. For a moment it disappeared in the foam, but when it had passed the surf it swam away from us in a straight line, towards the center of the bay, and rather above than below the waves. Until it was far away one could see it lift its head, and the natives followed it with their eyes as if they were witnessing a sea serpent swimming away. I had them bring the eggs into the house and I felt wonderful. In the afternoon one of the notables of the kampong came to shout at the gate that I never should have let the animal go, that he would have even given eight guilders for it.

I must have been about eleven years old at that time, it was perhaps during the last half-year of our stay in Sand Bay. I do not remember much about the last days there except the atmosphere. A young European came to live at the other side of Tjiletoeh; he had a gramophone, and we rowed over to listen to the music, which was much better than our symphonium. The waltz from *Coppelia, Tesoro mio,* Rodolphe's song from *La Bohème,* remind me of this period. We sometimes rowed up the Tjiletoeh until we reached an old farmer Pa Sain, who had the reputation of being able to *teloeh* (make people waste away through magic), which according to my father meant that he knew how to get rid of people by poison. He was a very small and skinny, beardless old man with smiling eyes. We had to get out of the boat and climb a steep wall, with steps dug out of the earth, which usually caused my mother great efforts, but once in the garden one was transplanted into a paradise; one sat, walked or crouched under the leaves; one ate fruits and all kinds of tuberous plants: oebi, talles, ketella, as much as one could eat. It was the jungle in all its loveliness; his house stood in the midst of the greenery, fish nets, fishing rods and farm implements stuck out from everywhere, and everywhere the bamboo had been colored with betel stripes. When it became dark we went back, my parents were

quiet, the oars creaked, the voice of Kiping at the rudder related a joke, and the sailors hummed a rowing chant. The setting sun on the broad Tjiletoeh, the shadows that fell quickly over the water and melted the lianas and rattan stalks on both shores with the foliage, the hollow, dry sound of the bird that was called *toekang kajoe* (woodpecker), and my hand gliding through the water, feebly gives me, as I think back to it, the atmosphere of those happy days when I was free of school books. We also went to the *sero,* a kind of labyrinth for fish, planted in the sea, with successive rooms out of which the fish did not dare escape because the openings through which they swam would end in a point in their direction. My mother always considered this way of catching fish a pleasure; for me a slight touch of seasickness spoiled the fun.

When my father gave up the work in the factory and specialized in the renting of plots in the interior, we made journeys to other regions and we again slept in native huts. My mother and I in sedan chairs, my father, Isnan and some village head on horseback, we would go through the woods, sometimes over swinging bamboo bridges; and at night we slept on mattresses on the floor, with my mother's sarongs put up by herself like mosquito curtains around us. I would have to write for pages and pages in order properly to picture these journeys, the enjoyment of having a breakfast consisting of weak coffee prepared in the native fashion and turtle eggs that had to be torn apart like parchment bags, the joy of entering a "small town" hardly as large as Pelaboean Ratoe, with a *passanggrahan,* where unexpectedly we would find a stack of torn European magazines, and a market where one might buy all sorts of baubles like great treasures, such as red-lacquered Japanese boxes and for Alima a kabaja pin with glass instead of diamonds.

In all this I have forgotten to mention my foster-sister Sylvia. Because they had no daughter my parents participated in the custom of many Indonesian families of adopting an *anak mas* (literally "golden child," foster-child).

One day my mother came home with a little girl that had been given her by a coolie, a child perhaps a year old, with a pretty round face and large dark eyes. It was called Bettina, after the operetta *La Mascotte,* because it had to be a mascot itself; my father played with it even more than my mother, but after a fortnight the parents came to fetch it back, the mother was continually crying for it and she was not able to separate herself from it. My parents sadly gave it back and let it be known in the

kampongs that they would like to adopt a child. From a village high above the Tjikanteh a woman came with a child nine months old, still carried in her *slendang,* with closed eyes, a flat face and feverish cheeks. It had, moreover, a wound in its forehead, because when its mother had gone into the rice field she had put it down somewhere on a rice block, and one day it had fallen from it. The child was less attractive than the one we had given back, but it was pathetic because of its situation: the mother was already an older woman, the father, a young man, was not married to her and had not been willing to recognize it. It came to live with us and in a few days my mother had cured it, the fever had disappeared, the wound was healed, only its flat features remained unchanged. The name given this child was no less classical, in the *anak mas* tradition, it was called Sylvia. I was about nine when it came, and it must have been almost three when we took it along from Sand Bay; still I do not remember anything about its first years but that it called me "pappy."

Neither do I remember how or when precisely we left; my parents and I had recently suffered from malaria, nevertheless it was their intention to return as soon as possible. But in Batavia itself my father found buyers for his renting plots; with the money he earned from this he had a small villa built on the land around Gedong Lami. We could live on the rents; the adventure of Balekambang had cost much energy and good humor but the financial losses suffered were thus made good. The factory there was neglected, and one day it burned down and the house where we had lived fell apart; nothing remained but the cocoanut trees grown wild. Some years later we went back for a visit: everything had changed, even the journey was different, because we went from Soekaboemi to Pelaboean in a car and from Pelaboean to Balekambang in a motor boat. Enih was married to a *koetjiah,* much older than she, and had gone away with him; the villagers called me *djoeragan anom* (young gentleman) instead of the familiar *neng* of before. I remember no more about this visit than that I stood alone under a large tree—the famous fig tree and looked towards Tjimarindjoeng, listening for sounds. There I had walked on bare feet, hidden behind the shrubs when we played Richard the Lionhearted and Ivanhoe. When we were afterwards in Europe, I thought back sometimes about this region as an ideal place to end a turbulent life; with just a few books, I imagined then, and making great friends of the villagers.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

Menno Ter Braak

THE INSTINCT OF THE INTELLECTUALS

WHEN I ASK MYSELF WHY DURING A NUMBER OF YEARS I INSTINCTively ranked a man like Spengler above the average intellectuals, I can find only one answer; Spengler cast aside the élite-principle of "spiritual" man and forced him without further ado to justify himself under the, to him completely foreign, aspect of power. The word "power" once seemed to me so superior to the phrases about a loftier life and advancing science, that it was easy for me to put Spengler's fatalism against the naked psychiatric work of Fedor Vergin, *Das Unbewusste Europa,* an argument filled with the typical sagacity of a scholar and with abstract optimism beneath the skin of an exactly as dogmatic pessimism. In the person of this Vergin was represented, so I thought at the time, the intellectual as counterfeiter, whose instinct of "little" man drives him to confuse the issue of might through something like a "soziale Vernunftreligion" as the fairy tale of the future after the psycho-analytical repast.

Since I wrote the essay, *A Study in Shadow* (1932), the intellectuals of Europe have had ample occasion to think deeply about the problem of power, which has become more plain than ever to them after Hitler's victory. If anything has contributed toward lessening the value of Spengler's words concerning power, it is most certainly the triumph of this fraud, and our mistake was, when we admired Spengler too eagerly, that, living under a democratic form of government, which respects the intellect up to a certain degree, we had only academically considered the expansion of power of those who not only despise the intellect but (what is worse) force it into servile malpractice. Whoever is put in the position of academically debating on the question whether power, and Hitler's betrayal of the people are two expressions for the same thing, might perhaps easily say yes, because an academic answer is after all as futile as an academic debate. I am convinced that one can only seriously consider such questions if one accepts responsibility. Most Europeans lack the imagination to guarantee at the price of their lives the answer to theoretical questions. Just as little as we wish to subject ourselves to the hellish pains which Philip II once suffered, so are we inclined to take a purely the-

oretical problem seriously. I do not claim exemption for myself; my admiration for Spengler always had an aesthetic, academic character, just as much in fact as my depreciation of the medicine man Vergin. As long as we profit from the advantages that democracy brings to the intellect, it is not hard for us to be antidemocratic fatalists and submit ourselves to the fact that history only exists as the struggle of one deceiver of the people against another. It was for that reason that a little fellow like Vergin, who resisted with all his might such fatalism and who did not even fight shy of a very cheap mythology as a final morality, seemed a rather reprehensible being to me. The Prussian Spengler, on the contrary, became a soldier from Pompeii, who is willing to die at his post, buried under the lava of vulgarity. It is a frequent phenomenon that intellectuals, who profit by nothing so much as by the democratic way of life, spare themselves no pain to do damage to democracy, because this democracy is founded on false principles and, moreover, does not recognize the beauty of dying at one's post.

Apparently one must have seen from nearby the triumph of power in the shape of a vulgar betrayal of the people to understand that the problem of power is not always only an academic and aesthetic problem. For to argue about power (and this is especially true about someone like Spengler), to write about power in the fatalistic style of the philosopher who stoically submits to the course of events, is already a proof of antagonism toward the existing powers; it is an attempt to reduce everything that is brutal and bestial in the display of power to an intellectual game and thus to bring within the power of the intellect. It is therefore not very astonishing that Spengler, immediately after the official recognition of National Socialism, ranked himself among its antagonists, though with not quite the Pompeian heroism one had been led to expect by his previous pronouncements. In his *Jahre der Entscheidung,* which for the greater part is a violent polemic against the new rulers, against their fusty autarchy and their noisy swindle about races, the name of Hitler does not occur. Apparently Spengler preferred not to identify the post at which he would have so willingly died with the prosaic latrine in which Erich Mühsam was hung. But however that may be, Spengler did not officially become a tool of the political gangsters; though his taking sides against National Socialism was of course in a quite correct manner morphologically and fatalistically made accountable, I am convinced that (like every decent intellectual who watches power function separated from the in-

tellect) he was first of all disgusted by the brawling of the power bad boys, whom he theoretically would have loved to have served . . . theoretically, that is. . . .

The problem of power and the intellectuals has since the advent of National Socialism, which also boasts of intellectuals to justify its power, changed color for us, just because it can no longer be called a theoretical problem. When we at this moment, in the year 1935, speak about *our* power problem, then we have let the all too obvious Spenglerian tone go by the board, because we have become aware that in the future we would rather be "illegal" intellectuals listening to hedge-sermons than numbered heroes with a skull added to our body. We must take into account that before long, perhaps, an intellectual will be talked about as one now talks about a professional criminal. Probably the intellectual will only exist in the greater part of Europe as a clever evader of the legal directives to think only as the leader thinks. It is possible that the once so much respected intellectual will be on the same level as the bootlegger and that official morals will judge him accordingly. Whatever power instinct we have within us protests against this. Rightly or wrongly? With or without a chance of success? It matters little, so long as we resist. Nobody enjoys living like a pariah among his fellow beings, not even the intellectual, though he once might have championed the cause of bohemianism at a time when the liberal citizens (in spite of moral objections) financially supported them. No intellectual who possesses anything like instinct can enjoy the idea that an original thought, uttered in public, may now carry the death sentence with it. The living condition for "thought" is "liberty": two words that twenty years ago sounded like platitudes and that achieve again today terrible actuality, because we are forced through "the revolt of the masses" to take into account in what a Yellowstone Park for intellectuals the nineteenth-century "thinker" really lived. Compared with the Hitler régime even the "curtailment of intellectual freedom" by the Czarist or the Kaiser's government gives us the impression of an impossible and very dilettantish effort to improve through pedagogical correction the work of scholars. As, moreover, the nineteenth century was considered "la vérité en marche," the intellect was able to allow itself the luxury of such opposition. There was no system at the base of it, and in the history books, which educate liberal youth, censure and Siberia are treated as the last manifestations of Metternich's Holy Alliance policy.

A beautiful illusion, originating in the blind self-satisfaction

of the Western European schoolmaster, who thought himself superior to the mammals on account of a couple of liberal and Darwinian phrases! The son of that schoolmaster became a Marxist, that is to say, he set the idea of evolution on its head in order to be able to admire it in a position more complimentary to this earth. ("Ganz im Gegensatz zur deutschen Philosophie, welche vom Himmel auf die Erde herabsteigt, wird hier von der Erde zum Himmel gestiegen"—Karl Marx in *Die Deutsche Ideologie.*) He yet remained a schoolmaster, more than ever full of "laws" and "improvements." Now the grandson stands again in Germany, as a schoolmaster before his class; from standing the ideal on its head he has now also taken away the head, so that finally (and one may at least congratulate oneself on the candor) the moment has come when the teacher shows himself openly as the enemy of thinking. The situation has been "clarified"; the schoolmaster, that is, the intellectual, who was by mistake so named, we see at this historical moment as the swindler pictured in his masterly invention, the Aryan. One may see from this development, foreseen by neither Hegel nor Marx, what conclusion may be drawn. The first conclusion is that for the intellectuals-by-mistake, the schoolmasters, there is no proper problem of power, because they make power subservient to the form of the state under which they have to live. They are satisfied with it in the liberal, as well as the Marxian and Fascist stadium, as long as the régime allows them to give up publicly a quantum of relatively sincerely meant word combinations. They do not want any more "liberty" for their "thought." The principal matter for them is that they can give up something in public, because that is how they retain a modicum of self-esteem; nothing therefore is easier for them than to "make a link" from one to the other phrase "acceleration." That is exactly what the German schoolteachers have done. It is therefore above all necessary to dissociate our problem of intellectuality and power completely from this schoolmaster's élite. For, apt in the art of compromise or harmless objectivity, they are ready at any time to fall in with the political ideology that makes their phrases adaptable to today as well as to tomorrow. The objectivity of the schoolmasters allows them always to be in time to welcome with gentle historical sounding of the trumpets the power constellation of the ruling or "coming" party, and to make it theoretically acceptable to the multitude who need the moral justification of schoolmasters in order to idolize a power constellation as the righteous one.

From the first conclusion follows the second: the intellectuals for whom the power problem exists are rare. By far more numerous are the industrious academicians, the harmless commentators, the sonorous ideologists, whose greatest pleasure consists in bellowing again and again through the fallacies of phrases all that through the fallacies of practical politics had already been accomplished. (This is often done in complete sincerity.) And the third conclusion: that the intellectuals have their own power problem, does not mean that we go back to the "soziale Vernunftreligion," to the end of the days of Fedor Vergin, who really only attempted to prove the "Vernunft" of the schoolmaster. When one has gone through Spengler, one *has* learned something—though in some respects perhaps—from a schoolmaster.

The schoolmaster, in all his dimensions, has not in vain been so long identified with *the* intellectual; he *was* indeed during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentith century the representative intellectual. By "schoolmaster" I mean in this case the cultured person who in order to maintain his prestige appeals to a "higher instance": Evolution, Spirit, the Word, Art, Objectivity, and whatever else one calls to mind. The schoolmaster is someone, who exists only by the grace of the authorities outside the schoolroom, and, when this authority fails, his authority also disappears. In the year 1935, the majority of the intellectuals are still under the spell of the belief in the authority of the schoolmaster. They do not dare play their role of intellectuals without borrowing the responsibility from no matter how minor a deity. That is the cause, among others, of their blessed belief in the little sun of reason, which is but temporarily obscured by the clouds of medieval superstition (the optimism of intellectuals), or their being permanently downcast on account of the clouds which have always obscured the sun and will continue to do so (pessimism of the intellectuals). One can see that in both cases the sun is the "higher instance." That is why the intellectuals in their attitude toward what they believe to be the man of the masses show a schoolmasterish naiveté, which is only exceeded by their schoolmaster's conceit. Depending on whether they belong to the optimistic or pessimistic faction, they make it appear as if their élite humanity must triumph some time (though a lot of confusion will precede it) or is perhaps too good ever to triumph in this miserable world. These are two poses which may today cause loud laughter, but which nevertheless dominate the behavior of the schoolmasters. For these intellectuals the growing

barbarism of the masses is but an interlude on the road to a fate which makes their own superiority appear to that much greater advantage.

It follows therefore that, from everything at present being done in intellectual circles, the intellect has become only in exceptional cases *instinct*. Most intellectuals show derision for such an instinct and would rather camouflage themselves as women-chasers or Balkan travelers than admit freely that they are neither one nor the other without the intermediary of literature. They have doubtlessly instinct enough; they have their vanities, they have the desire to rule over some portion of the world in one way or another by wielding their pen. It is evident that their intellectual function renders them a valuable service. But when they are asked to relinquish their authority, the "higher instance," one sees them retreat and hide themselves behind the cheapest taboos. They dare not approach the intellect as instinct; preferably they justify themselves by contrasting instinct and intellect, so that on the one hand they can proudly elevate the intellect as the standard of humanity and on the other can still play their instinctive roles; because the average intellectual wants to be a thinking human being, but by all means not an intellectualist! This interpretation of intellect and instinct is still dominated by the (mostly not even clearly realized) supposition that instinct is something original, animalistic, paradisical and impenetrable, that intellect on the contrary is something derivative, human, abstract and fixed; as if hunger and love were not just as much disciplined by civilization as the intellect, as if our hunger and our love were not just as much phenomena of a definite period of life! The use of the word instinct in contrast to the intellect betrays the schoolmaster who for centuries has accentuated this contrast as a guarantee of human dignity; by human dignity the schoolmaster means the dignity of a small group of "civilized people," who borrow from this contrast the right to consider themselves an élite. The intellect guarantees culture, and culture guarantees the instincts a cultural name; that is why the schoolmaster wants instinct and intellect to remain separate conceptions.

This interpretation of the relation between the intellect and instinct has been current since the Renaissance, and one may deduce from its currency that it was needed to make European culture possible. Among other things it gave to culture authority not only for the masses, who hardly took part in any cultural preoccupations, but also vis-a-vis the culture-carriers themselves;

by clothing this play of culture with the responsibility of "higher" aims, by putting the aim outside itself, it enabled the culture-carriers to look at the particular instinct which drove them to the stylization of their expression of life, as being not an instinct at all. Culture remained "the higher," the authoritative, the *urge* for culture was not admitted among the instincts. Now, after the dismal mess the intellectuals made in Germany, this is more than ever obvious, because as long as the cultural game is continuously considered under the aspect of authority and is therefore placed above the instincts, the player remains a *bad* player, without the true intimacy which there should be between player and game. The sort of intimacy which used to exist between culture and the intellectuals (and still exists), was (and is still) often the intimacy between a lion-tamer and his circus lions. Only the innocent public, who have come one evening to admire a harmonious performance, actually see a unity of "thought and feeling," but one need only let the well-informed keeper, the cynic, tell something about his experiences "behind the scenes," to know that the illusion in this instance only serves the desired appearance.

So when the intellectuals, in order to defend their position, call upon an authority, a "higher instance," they call upon the lion-tamer. One observes immediately from the cultural movements of the lions through the coercion of a whip, how they "inwardly" stand for the tricks which they must perform to give "sense" to their circus existence! If schoolmasters could be born among these circus lions, they would surely be lions that have become conceited because of the fact that they (thanks to the whip, which however is never mentioned among nice lions) have become superior to desert lions by their far-famed pyramid number. . . .

When I am told that there is not much news in all this and that, since Freud, the "better" intellectuals have fewer pretensions, I am not immediately ready to agree. Indeed, it is not especially typical of modern intellectuals to draw attention to the contrast between intellect and instinct; when they still do this, psychoanalysis is immediately invoked, while the efforts of Adler and all the little Adlers to sabotage Freud through a new religious urge too obviously betray their preconceived Jesuitism. However, one must not tackle the schoolmaster on his theory only, that is, under his most unreal mask; there especially the schoolmaster becomes a piquant phenomenon because he is quite ready to give up everything *theoretically,* when in reality he

firmly holds on. Freud himself is one of the best examples of a schoolmaster, who committed suicide in theory and nevertheless stays alive as the "sublimated schoolmaster." Instinctively, that is, in all its manifold forms, the schoolmasterish intellectual sticks to his interpretation of the relation between intellect and instinct, because its abandonment would force him either to let go of the whole cultural hierarchy or to admit, without any reservation, that he defends himself as an intellectual *because he cannot do otherwise.* This last admission, the most honest an intellectual is capable of, implies that he admits defending himself with nothing but his instinct.

When one considers the words, "truth," "justice," "spirit," "liberty," and others which are used to death by the schoolmasters, as the instinctive words of intellectuals, then they suddenly achieve a new color. They become the terms in which intellectuals put their power problem aggressively and in this aggressiveness, purely. After having lived a long and once upon a time undoubtedly fruitful existence as terms of justification, they have arrived at the state of instinctive innocence. They may even, as soon as the circumstances have altered, be exchanged for their opposites, without thereby harming the intentions of their users. Terms like "truth" and "freedom" have sense for those who love truth and freedom only, when they realize that as soon as they are spelled with a capital they are already falsified and that without *un*-truth and *un*-freedom they represent nothing. They are our "power words," now in attack and now in defense, and their effect is to be judged by their offensive or defensive positions. Under certain circumstances it may even be quite desirable for an intellectual to fight for un-truth and un-freedom; not *always* are the Nazi swindlers of the "folkish" symbols on the other side of the fence. Our phraseology at present is again in accordance with the slogans of the French Revolution, though as little as five years ago we were disgusted with "liberté, égalité, fraternité." For the same reason barricades are only raised when the situation requires it.

Let us, however, be careful in making the schoolmaster absolute. An absolute schoolmaster, outside ourselves, who acts "in the name of civilization,"—not to speak of even cheaper slogans—is easily recognized, because one cannot mistake his tone. Much more dangerous and problematic is the schoolmaster that every intellectual carries within himself because of his past. We are not being created out of nothing; we are the products of the carefully nurtured schoolmaster discipline of centuries. Even

without having been seduced by the swindle of the "Erbmasse," everybody, merely by listening to himself, may be caught by an inherited burden of schoolmaster's conclusions. The intellectual who justifies himself only by his instinct is a relatively new phenomenon, because in past periods of culture he could only lead an officious existence. One may see him for instance in the sceptic or vitalist, who rebelled against the schoolmaster and yet was often in a sense his dupe. By doubting he tried to wear out the intellect (the extreme consequence of this was Pascal); by vitalistic slogans he tried to orientate it toward the power problems of generals and Huns; so is pessimism on the one hand a forced attempt at conformity, on the other hand often the masquerading of people whose strongest instinct was the intellect itself. Nietzsche too, above all man of intellectual instinct or of the instinct which has become the intellect, had at the time of his *Der Wille zur Macht* a distinct inclination to force himself to participate in society as during his Wagnerian period he was inclined to interpret pessimistically his predestination to be a typical intellectual. The intellectual then, and this should not be overlooked, was always "protected" by the schoolmaster and his authority and thereby motivated as a human being. As soon as he is limited to his instinct, he must find the means to maintain and justify himself, that is, to live according to his possibilities. The merchant, the diplomat and the laborer, the miser, the Don Juan and the gastronome, have therefore more assuredness in their acts than the intellectual abandoned by the schoolmaster. The merchant calls upon his affairs, the diplomat upon the interest of the state, the laborer on the proletariat, and such pretexts are generally sufficient to act, to transact and to act together. The schoolmaster allowed the intellectual to act under the pretext of the evolution of another "higher instance." What can the intellectual do without this authority for acting of the schoolmaster, when he encounters stagnation and his instinct asks for the true-hearted security of words? It seems to me that his first reaction would thus be to recall the schoolmaster. For he is often a comforter; moreover, he is waiting at the door and he does not bear any grudges; for an authority that has become unfashionable since the intellectual got rid of it in order to trust to his own instinct, he gives lovingly a new authority in exchange which may even be masked deceivingly as a duplicate of the instinct. Just because we cannot afford to miss the word as a means to power, we are also exposed to the schoolmaster's vengeance by the word. As soon as we have used it in a sentence, the sentence

threatens us with a false responsibility, the responsibility of "what has once been said." What I repeatedly admire in Nietzsche is above all the readiness to overcome this crafty responsibility; no stagnation of the instinct, nor the hussar's contours of the "Uebermensch" have been able to make him a vassal of the grammarians, no matter how much he too (and he especially) could guarantee that "what has once been said." If Nietzsche sometimes called back the schoolmaster, he was never the man to take advantage of it; he dismissed him again with a new phrase and remained what he dared to be: an intellectual.

They have tried to tell us that this independence based on the intellectual instinct is nothing but the flattering formula for a social stroke of luck. They have tried to interpret Nietzsche, the lonely and asocial intellectual, in the light of historical materialism as the more or less unsuccessful bourgeois professor, who was able to be independent and courageous because he had a little money. And indeed, the Marxist is right, when he considers independence and a pension as the two sides of a same question. The intellectual unfolding of Nietzsche's "spirit" is as little to be dissociated from his potentialities as a *rentier* as the pamphlets filled with platitudes of so many Marxist apologists from their lack of inherited capital. We cannot better show the cheapness of this kind of incontrovertible facts than to obey our intellectual instinct in the middle of the large cities of Europe, without a pension and far away from Nietzsche's home in the solitude of Sils-Maria. The establishing of these "truths" serves exclusively to give those who utter them an opportunity to free themselves from the "truths" that Nietzsche has formulated in his *rentier's* segregation. In this manner too does the schoolmaster attempt to maintain his authority.

The intellectual instinct is not a miracle, neither is it a panacea, nor is it possible to think of it independent of the society in which it manifests itself. Probably it will have disappeared after five days of starvation and a week or two of concentration camp; it is possible, it is even probable. But when we are confronted with this fact, as if it would mean a lessening of the intellectual instinct, then we know that here again speaks "objectivity," which can no longer unconditionally obey any single strong instinct. We really do not belong among those who doubt instinct because it has "been developed" and the story of its source can still be followed by proofs at hand! Neither do we believe in the intellectual instinct because there always has been one and there always will be one; perhaps it has seldom been there, perhaps it

has never been there in that form; perhaps in fifty years it will only exist illicitly. I accept the fact that Erasmus, who is looked upon as the typical intellectual, was a schoolmaster to a high degree, simply because a schoolmaster at the time represented and resumed within himself civilization, and even the man with the habits of a born polemist could not have missed the schoolmasterly justification. One would have to mix Erasmus with Machiavelli to obtain a substance that would make us think of "our" intellectual with his own power problem; but it is certain that Erasmus and Machiavelli, if they had known each other, would have passed each other by, probably as sworn enemies.

Considerations about the past and the future of intellectuals are in the last instance intellectual considerations; in many cases they are, moreover, a sign of intellectual weakness in the intellectual instinct, which needs the affirmation of a curve to believe in its right of existence. A Machiavellian Erasmus, an Erasmic Machiavelli: even from this synthesis of two names as the symbol of intellectual instinct one can realize why it is so difficult for the intellectual to be intellectual without the schoolmaster's protective covering. In so far as he has an "Erasmus" in him he wishes not to give up the intellect as a principle of the élite; at any price he wants to remain a humanist and to preach the crusade against the "revolt of the masses" under the motto of "lofty historical duties" (Ortega y Gasset, Julien Benda). In so far as he has a "Machiavelli" within him, he is ready to put himself on the same level as the beast of prey and to roar louder about power relations than the human voice is really allowed to roar on paper (Spengler, Julius Evola). But "Erasmus" and "Machiavelli" cannot any longer be separated in the intellectual; the countermelody in Ortega y Gasset is Machiavellian, and Spengler in the professor's chair at the University of Leyden is rather a fat Erasmus than the celebrated two-in-one of the lion and the fox of *Il Principe*.

"The person who lives another life than his own, who has falsified himself, must try to justify himself in his own eyes," said Ortega y Gasset in an excellent essay about Goethe, in which he tries to explain the Weimar double of Goethe. One should like to apply the quotation much more broadly; in the first place to all intellectuals who twist themselves into the most elegant and objective poses in order to remain faithful to "Erasmus" and "Machiavelli," which means in both cases to their schoolmasters. What the "other" and their "own" life is, even a virtuoso like Ortega y Gasset will find hard to decide, without calling upon

his "own" instinct, when the whole play of culture is pointed to make the other one's "own," and to objectivate one's own so much into the other that at times it seems to "sing itself loose." Whether in the future we shall play the part of the intellectual or the pariah can no longer be predicted with any certainty; but as long as a strong instinct dares talk about barbarians and swindlers, where it concerns those who waste the terms of the intellect for a race theory, the intellect of Europe will still be more than an academic curiosity and an objective perfume.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

S. Vestdijk

THE WATCHMAKER VANISHES

WITH A LITTLE EXAGGERATION ONE MIGHT SAY THAT ALBERTUS Cockange became a watchmaker the moment his great-grandfather established the watch business. He was what he was before he existed and was at that time already a watchmaker, a remarkable craftsman. The only thing his great-grandfather, his grandfather and his father could do was to beget him, in this form, with this future career. Incidentally, his most precious heritage was not the watch business but his ability to identify himself completely with the clockworks that were submitted to him. Not infrequently he performed the most complicated repairs without paying the slightest attention to the customer who stood waiting in front of the counter.

One rainy morning he was about to pry open the lid of an unusually thick, old-fashioned watch, which he had been told was slow, when he saw, lying a little to the left but at the same distance from the edge of the counter, a pale hand opening and closing as if to attract attention or to give a sign. He looked at it with half an eye. That this hand belonged to the man who had just come into the shop hardly entered his head, although he vaguely remembered an ungainly figure in a loose dark raincoat with collar turned up above the ears. But the man had no sooner handed over the watch and stated the complaint, than he vanished out of Cockange's circle of vision, and even now the pale hand, pushed so far, so impertinently far forward, seemed more a part of the rows of clockworks under the plate glass, on

which it lay, than part of a human body. Working away mechanically, he determined, more out of habit than fear of wasting time, not to let himself be distracted. This resolve was really nothing but a further confirmation that once again he would not allow himself to be distracted, and this gave him satisfaction.

Meanwhile the opening and closing continued regularly, dully, almost pathologically; it looked like the symptom of a grave nervous disorder, the convulsions of which a competent physician had provisionally regulated before achieving a complete cure. While working, Cockange had again to take notice of it. It did not enter his head that he might be being made a fool of; he did not think of the possibility that the man wished to furnish some more particulars about the bulky watch by means of this monotonous gesture language; not for a second did his fingers cease their insect-like movements. He was not frightened; he was hardly disturbed. But perhaps, he thought, it would be better if the hand were taken away.

He was on the point of mumbling something about it when his efforts were crowned with success and he succeeded in opening the lid. Without doubt the inside of the watch would now have drawn his entire attention away from the pale hand, if his eye had fallen on an ordinary brass interior instead of on what really filled the watch: a piece of thick paper folded together, crumpled at the four corners where it had conformed to the roundness of the case. While the hand went on uninterruptedly with its finger gymnastics, the watchmaker suddenly thought of the students to whom his wife rented rooms and who had once hoisted a chair on the flag-pole. These annoying rowdies, three in number, supplied in turn by his wife and two daughters with tea and food and suits cleaned after being bespattered on a drinking bout, were one of the reasons why Cockange shut himself up more and more with his work and did not leave the shop for days; sometimes he even had his dinner brought to the workshop or behind the counter, and then had to be on the lookout for greasy fingers on the watchglasses, while after matrimonial quarrels he often slept on a camp bed which he had had put up in this same workshop. He frequently had disputes about these students with his stout, surly wife and he trusted his daughters, especially the youngest, less since he had seen her late one evening walking arm in arm under an umbrella with one of the three, or perhaps a fourth student, for enough of them came to smoke and carry on in the rooms upstairs, shouting down with affected voices for fresh tea. His old father, blind and half-childish, often

asked whether it was thundering when the students were at it upstairs. But, because they had a separate entrance, Cockange had thus far never been bothered by them in the shop.

In order to ascertain whether one of them had now after all entered the shop in disguise to play this trick upon him, he slowly raised his head. Then he heard the voice of the visitor, and it was certainly not that of a student.

"You had better look at the hand."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Albertus Cockange, the awl in one hand, the deceptive watch in the other, and his eyes turned searchingly to the face opposite him, which was just as pale, fleshy and sickly as the hand that made the movements, and at the same time absolutely vacant, without explanatory mimicry. That the man had said "the hand" and not "my hand" underlined the independent life that Cockange thought he had already noticed in it.

"I have nothing to do with the hand," he said, "I am a watchmaker and not a salesman for joke articles and surprises."

"That is not necessary, either," the man asserted, his eyes sliding over his right sleeve to the hand and back again. "Just as a watchmaker you had better look at the hand instead of trying to start business conversations."

"But I don't want to look at the hand," said Albertus Cockange.

"If you look or not, it will happen all the same," remarked the man, who stopped sweeping his arm with his glance. He looked at the wall behind Cockange, where about forty clocks were ticking, and continued: "Only you will still have to say what you choose: write or make sounds."

"Now look," said Cockange, forcing himself to a vicious affability, "I can ring up anyone from here. Kindly take that watch with the paper in it away with you immediately, and the hand too."

The man began to laugh. "I knew that watchmakers were against themselves, but . . ." Suddenly he again stared at the hand so immovably and significantly that the watchmaker had willy-nilly to look too, and he then said with something triumphant in his voice:

"Now you must look! Now look! Now look what is happening to the hand."

"I don't want to look at the hand," repeated the watchmaker dully, as if under compulsion, already entirely engrossed by the new performances of the part of the body indicated. Meanwhile

the man looked on, beyond his outstretched arm, as absorbed as the other whom he kept egging on to miss nothing of the spectacle. Behind the watchmaker ticked the clocks; their forty-fold rhythm made him dizzy; one was just striking three despite the fact, also neglected by the other clocks, that it was about half-past ten in the morning; it confused him to think of this difference while he had to look, and he really looked, yes, looked and listened; he did not notice how the awl slipped from his fingers to the counter and that the watch had been pushed to the edge with the bulging paper now only half in it. What he saw was this: the pale hand that lay on the plate glass with the palm up was now only half a hand. Nothing of the fingers could be seen except an indistinct swaying, floating like an X-ray photo over the glass, while the palm of the hand, the three or four sutures of which ran diagonally or crosswise and were alternately brought together in folds and separated from each other, was eaten away on the little finger side. This process was now completed with considerable rapidity. The regular movement of the fingers stopped, the palm of the hand took on a wedge-shaped appearance and then melted away to a little notched triangle next to which the stump of the thumb continued the movement longest. Would it now be the turn of the wrist, the arm, the trunk, the whole body to disappear? But before it had gone that far the man pulled his arm back and put the invisible hand into his coat pocket. Albertus Cockange's legs were trembling.

"Now, you will begin too," said the man, who apparently did not take much notice of the disappearance of his hand. "Only tell me first what you want. For a thinking man, writing seems preferable to making sounds, especially if you are contemplating continuing to live in this clock shop. There are already enough noises here, yet the time is not properly indicated, so that I must now assume at random that it is half-past ten. Besides, you will have to reckon that, in case you prefer making sounds, speaking is not included."

When he noticed that the watchmaker continued to stare at him with open mouth, the man approached and stood close to the counter. In a more confidential tone he gave further particulars.

"You would have become blind as a bat. But your father's blindness was enough reason for you to choose the other way. And then you will have to admit that you are tired, dead tired, less from seeing than from being seen. Think of all those spying eyes: the brass wheels, the everlasting, restless blinking, your own

eyes staring at you from watchglasses and the smoothly polished insides of watches whose owners watch your fingers. I could explain all this to you. What I mean is: gradually you have acquired in common with all these objects the fact that you can only be looked at," and he threw a glance around the shop, sparing none of the things that indicated time. "Your body has gradually become a mechanism, something amusing for the village fair, a deplorable adjustment to the thing which I tried to make you realize by means of the behavior of my hand, which has meanwhile become invisible. You are a watchmaker, are you? You *were* a watchmaker! You have gone too far, Albertus Cockange. You have served your time; now you will be thrust through space. You must go back to the many different kinds of interchangeable possibilities and impossibilities. . . ." He was interrupted by a weak cry. In an outburst of anger Albertus Cockange was trying to check the visitor's flow of words by hurling, if not the thick watch, then its paper contents like a pellet at his head, when he noticed that he was subject to the same process as the pale hand just now on the counter. Half of his right arm had already dissolved. The left one was wasting away more irregularly, with a frothy bubbling and little clouds of steam. His clothes were going the same way. His whole suit was going—but if that had been all! He looked down and no longer saw his feet. Was it imagination that all over his body a soft hissing could be heard, as if a lump of sodium were oxydizing in the air? No wonder he staggered and closed his eyes and could give no reply to the question that was now being asked for the third time:

"So what do you want? To write or make sounds?"

"Write . . . or . . .," stammered the watchmaker, merely repeating the question with sickly lips that were dissolving into a soft jelly. But the man stuck to the first word and brought out a dirty notebook from which he drew a little note block and put it down on the counter. With his invisible hand he scribbled a few words. Albertus Cockange was now invisible except for the left thigh, but he could still see perfectly how the little pad, a silver pencil and the notebook were put aside again and how the man turned away without a word, intending to leave the shop. At this moment footsteps were heard from the sitting room.

A square-shouldered woman with a boxer's chin stepped in maliciously, with awkward, lounging movements. She looked behind the counter, then at the visitor at the door.

"Isn't my husband here?" she asked; whereupon, turning to the door of the workshop, she called: "Ab! Ab!" "Ab isn't here,"

said the man not unkindly, pressing his invisible hand stiffly against his body. Albertus in a panic had almost collided with his wife, who was dashing up and down behind the counter and in an outburst of impatience threw first the little sheet of paper, then the contents of the watch under the counter into a corner. Albertus did not know what would happen if he ran into his wife; it seemed to him that she would probably suffer most; he therefore shot round the counter, the point of the plate glass cutting him through the hip, by chance the one that had not yet become absolutely invisible. It hurt him, but not badly. As he wanted on no account to let the man get away, there was nothing to do but run, or float to the shop door, for running was so easy that it hardly deserved the name. He was afraid to call out, because of his wife, but if it came to the worst, he would even do this.

"Is this your watch?" asked Albertus Cockange's wife. The man had opened the door. "No, it's Ab's," he said, mealy-mouthed and facing her.

"Aren't you taking it along, sir?" asked the woman.

"It's Ab's, I told you," said the man.

"Ab's? . . . My husband's name is Cockange," she said suspiciously; then, after a moment's thought she held up the watch. "You'd better take it along; we don't buy old gold."

"Old gold doesn't rust," said the man, grasping the doorknob, "and work ennobles." He opened the door in order to run up the street. At that moment the watchmaker wanted to start shouting something like, "Stop thief!" but to his dismay—far greater than when he was becoming invisible—he noticed that he could not utter a word. Hurrying to the door, he saw the man already on the steps in front of the window. When he too wanted to grasp the doorknob his hand slipped right through it, fell through it, without a trace of pain. And then he realized that he would not be able to stop the man even if he caught up with him. That finished him. He yelled noiselessly, raised his hands to his throat as if to press out the sound that did not come; he crouched down, straightened himself in despair, jumped up with a feeling in his feet as if he were treading on a soft balloon and knocked his forehead against a clock on the top shelf without feeling anything of the bump. He was only aware of, "The clock! if I go to pot, a clock too," but nothing happened. The clock pointed to ten minutes to eight and continued ticking, although Cockange's forehead had also been near the spring, right inside. Elastically he came down again upon his invisible toes. And like a cat in

its death struggle he repeated the useless jumps, always with his hands at his throat, two or three metres high in all directions, against clocks, passing through strings of watches, thick plate glass and wood, but always within the walls of the shop. When he was beginning to realize that he would go mad if it went on like that, he fainted and remained lying motionless near the floor mat for a quarter of an hour. Three customers waded through him during this time.

His first thought, after he had dragged himself out of the shop and halfway up the stairs to the first floor (where he sat with his head in his hands or half through his hands just as it happened to be), was pretty foolish and entirely unreasoning: that now he could no longer die. What had come over him was indeed much worse than death, although he felt fairly quiet, without the despair of before his swoon and even fairly comfortable, apart from the slight twitch in his left hip which had remained after contact with the plate glass. This hip, in which the process of becoming invisible was apparently arrested, remained a place of greater density in his body for some time, like a knot in a plank; perhaps if one looked carefully one would even discover some shadowy bundles of muscles, but in a few hours that would be over and no sensitive plate would have recorded anything of his body floating by, or a hand passing through him feel any resistance. On account of the hip, Albertus Cockange compared himself not irreligiously with Jacob who had fought with the angel.

Although he was safe everywhere and could, so to speak, have hung over the electric chandelier in the sitting-room, he went to the loft in order to be able to think better. Little rooms were partitioned off, a servant's bedroom and two for guests: and he now tried to get accustomed to his new existence by walking through the walls from one to the other or by standing in such a way that his body was in three rooms at the same time. He also jumped a great deal and at one moment even pushed his head between the roofing tiles; as it was still raining, he pulled it in again, although the drops naturally fell through his head without making it wet in the same way as his head penetrated solid objects. What impressed him was that the force of gravity still had a hold upon him. He could get through everything, through wood, almost as easily through iron—he tried it with an old bedstead—and by applying himself he could float wherever he wanted to. But if he then relaxed, which was not very difficult after a little practice, he came down again on the spot from which he

had risen, unless an unusually thick sheet of iron was between him and that spot.

Although all this gave him a childlike pleasure, at which he caught greedily as at a compensation for what had come over him, he determined not to commit any stupidities and not to abuse his new powers. On the following days he therefore followed the normal way of getting from one room to another, except when all the doors were closed, and then he went right through them. The sight of a crack where he could just squeeze through pleased him; he then made himself quite narrow and acted as much as possible as the former Albertus Cockange would have done, deliberately overlooking the fact that frequently large pieces of his body, whose measurements had remained unchanged, still cut through the wood of the door and doorpost. He could not see this, of course, but he noticed it by an extremely delicate, swift, crunching feeling which he from now on called the "wood-worm tingling." Only of woolen and linen materials he felt nothing; he once danced round his wife's wardrobe in order to confirm this once and for all. He saw all these things like every mortal; to his eyes there was no difference between one material or another as regards their transmission of light rays. If he was inside, it was simply dark round him. The fact that he could not speak or make any other sound fitted in with the announcement of the man in the shop. He breathed ordinarily, although this was apparently not necessary, any more than was sleeping, which, owing to the general relaxation of the muscles, could also have had strange consequences. The taking of food and what belonged to it no longer existed. To his former existence there testified, besides his memories which had not faded, only an occasional unbearable itch in his fingers for the movements of gimlet, chisel and file, and the longing of his eyes for diminutive brass objects.

As he was unable to think of the shop without horror and worried so much about the fate of the watch business that he preferred avoiding his wife's and daughters' conversations on the subject, he at first remained in the loft the greater part of the day. When he had once become accustomed to the new conditions of life, had learnt to move about without being astonished that he never knocked himself against anything and could say to himself without a trace of inner protest: "I am invisible, I am no longer a watchmaker, but I am invisible," as if the main thing about it all was not so much his unusual condition as the incompatibility of the conceptions "invisible" and "watchmaker"

—he settled down for hours to brood on the beginning of his adventure: the man in the shop, the watch, the paper, the hand and the little note pad. He had wanted to find the man again, not to ask him for an explanation of something so strange, but to call him to account. He would like to seize that fellow by the collar and bring him back to the shop, as if then everything could be undone on the spot. Where was he and who was he? Would he, Albertus Cockange, ever be able to be visible again with or without the intermediary of this man? What was written on the torn-off little paper, and what on the thick paper in the watch? But under no circumstances would he have gone to the shop to ascertain these things.

Before one of these questions could entirely preoccupy him, however, a new perspective was opened by the reflection that though he could not seize the man by the collar, he could track him down, no matter what thereupon happened. Nothing prevented him from leaving the house, he had only to walk through the roofing tiles and he would be in the open; and if he, out of respect for the former Albertus Cockange and his habits, definitely wanted to go out by a door to reach the street, there was available the door used by the students instead of the shunned shop door, to permit his leaving. Cockange's house had rather a complicated construction, mainly because it really consisted of two houses. It was a strange world of rooms which he could cross at will in all directions, so that passages seemed like rooms too because one entered them in the same way from the top left-hand corner, or by putting one's head through a skirting board; ordinary people never enter or leave a passage, they go through a passage. The two houses stood behind one another, which was made clear to visitors by a double scar in the form of a little staircase in the two enormously long passages; the first floor of the house formerly in front was occupied by the students: this part was connected with the street door by means of a stair. Besides that, there was a middle stairway leading from the sitting-room to the back part of the first floor and through a passage door also to the students; this functioned especially as a servants' stairway; his daughters and sometimes his wife tripped or stumbled up it with steaming dishes on a tray, but in the evenings they went more stealthily to their bedrooms, not so much in order not to disturb the students, who generally began to kick up a row at that time, as not to be heard by them and run the risk of another request for tea or grog. The blind, half-childish father was generally put to bed at eight o'clock.

Strange that Albertus Cockange, devising plans to leave the house, was more and more intrigued by its intricacy. And not only that; he seemed attached to the house. Although of course he would always be able to return, it is questionable whether he would still possess the strength, after the experiences that awaited him outside. For that is what was occupying his mind more and more; not the man he wanted to find, but the paths he would follow to find the man, paths to freedom, unknown paths. . . . After all, the man was nothing more than a pretext. The outside world, and the incredible adventures an invisible man, even an invisible watchmaker, was capable of, were beckoning. What a watchmaker! Watchmaker is what he had been; now he could do everything and be everybody, everybody and nobody. He could keep an eye on everybody from as close by as he wished, first the watchmakers, his former competitors, then the others, as they had formerly done in regard to him; everything they said and did and wrote, how they plotted—the statesmen, politicians—how they loved and hated and all the rest of it; in short it was too much for him. And then, finally—then he remembered for the first time the choice he had had to make quickly—would he perhaps be able to write down all that he came to know, what he saw and overheard?

Animated by this thought he hastened to the wall of the servant's bedroom, near which he was sitting, and scraped his right first finger over it, obeying an impulse, a contraction and urge in the invisible muscles, which had suddenly replaced the craving for subtle fingering, Cockange's worst torment since the change. And he was able to—he wrote. Letters as if in pencil, not very black but pretty thick and clear-cut, grew before his eyes, and as his sense of feeling indicated, from his fingers. He wrote with pleasure, not too much at a time, but drawing handsomely with a vain complacency. He wrote: "Albertus Cockange, watchmaker, Albertus Cockange, formerly watchmaker, was overcome by something in the shop—in the shop—in the shop, Albertus Cockange" —and more such words that signified nothing. Then he sighed deeply and wanted to rub it out with his fingers, but this of course he could not do; once written down they were beyond his power. He had not reckoned with that. The pattering of the rain —again the rain—attracted his attention. He shuddered a little, although there could be no question of real cold. He shuddered on account of the world outside, of the things in the great space on which he appeared to have so little hold. This writing exer-

cise did more than anything else to tie him to the house during the first few weeks.

Insensibly he overcame all diffidence as to what could be discussed about the watch business and often he spent half an hour at a time with his family, mostly squatting in a corner of the large, irregularly built sitting-room, which opened by means of a garden door into a dark little courtyard. The reasons he gave himself for this aloofness—he could just as well have moved up to the family circle, he could have sat on the table with his behind in the soup tureen, although that would never have entered his head—were that he could get a better general view in this way: there his wife with her jaw and sallow skin, often scolding, there his daughters, the youngest despite her spectacles not uncomely, with a particularly pretty figure that had often made him think of her with good-natured chaste consolation, since she had reached maturity, as of a woman that would make a man happier than he had ever been, finally the old grandfather with his gray spectacles, his bald head with irregular tufts of hair and his trembling chin, whose childishness expressed itself especially in the incoherent manner in which he, as initiate, spoke of watches. By observing this circle as a whole, he imagined, he would be able to study how things stood more easily than by a more individualized spying. In reality quite different reasons made him remain in the corner of the room.

Soon he noticed that his going had not caused the least disturbance, except perhaps for the first few days. Everything went on as before. People rang up about repairs, bills were presented and made out, and his wife kept the cash; the amounts that were concerned showed clearly that the business was flourishing despite the invisibility of its owner. How could this be explained? Neither his wife nor his daughters knew anything about clocks and watches, while his father was at a stage at which he needed winding up himself, so to speak, in order to be able to make another step. From several utterances it seemed, and he was surprised that he had not thought of it earlier, that they had taken an assistant or substitute, probably a competent craftsman and surely an industrious one, for all those weeks Albertus Cockange had not caught sight of him. Following the example of the former master he not only spent all his working hours in the shop and the workroom but probably ate and slept there too. The only thing that made Cockange doubt the existence of an assistant was the circumstance that he never saw his wife, otherwise

a great meddler and keen on money, check the actual shop books; she displayed great confidence, which would have astonished him with regard to himself, let alone a hired hand. Also in the following respect nothing had changed: his wife and daughters concentrated entirely on preparing what the gentlemen students desired; they cooked, brought home bottles, made these bottles disappear again; then a bespattered suit came along and the youngest daughter or the eldest went to work at it, singing. Conversation at table also turned upon the students. They raised their pranks, or at least excused them, and even his wife, otherwise so imperious, was indulgent toward the students, the racket they made and the dirt on the stairs. It was true, they paid well. Sometimes the old man looked suspiciously at the ceiling; but that was nonsense; the bedrooms were up there; the students lived in the front part of the house and only if they went jigging and singing could one hear them. The old man trembled and spilt his cereal; for him there were many things not right in this house; not infrequently he suspected during the meal that a student, an overgrown young gentleman, stood behind his shoulders; they would tie his napkin round him in a minute, he had better make them laugh; he could do it very well. Then he would turn round spitting a fine streak of pap, so fine that the bothersome daughter-in-law did not notice it and say with a bleating sound: "I too was often drunk." If one of the daughters then came to help, he recognized her by the smell of toilet soap instead of the already expected cigarette smell, this toilet soap that was more familiar to him than the one with which he himself was occasionally washed. For it was the girls during the last few years who brought him to and from his bedroom and let him get a breath of fresh air on very hot summer nights on the canal in front of the house. And he smelt their hands and faces, large invisible flowers, which had been brought close enough but not too close to his.

Now, was there a substitute or wasn't there? It sometimes happened that his daughters or his wife used expressions like: "He isn't in," or "Isn't he coming?" or "Go and give him that, will you?" At first Cockange thought that this referred to one of the boarders, the tall student with the finely chiseled nose, who had found most favor with the ladies despite his ridiculous exactingness, which trotting about from morning till night could hardly satisfy. But then there were some remarks in connection with a broken spring, a time-piece glass-bell, that left no doubt. Here at first his own name was used, probably—he came into the room

just too late to be sure—as a hint of how things used to be done. They seemed to have forgotten him very quickly; but his relation to his wife had been cool of late, and the girls were superficial creatures. Perhaps the whole affair, in which doubtless the police had interfered in the beginning, was too painful to them.

A short time after that he saw his successor in the flesh, in the half dark, so that he had to guess, but it could not very well have been anyone else. It was a strange meeting; he was more curious than suspicious, although his suspicion had been fed the last few days by something that should really have prepossessed him in the man's favor as a worker: his obstinate preference for workroom and shop. In this way, however, he escaped all control; would he not be able to idle with impunity, appropriate valuables, embezzle money? Here it should be mentioned that the invisible man did not feel inclined to play the role of supervisor, not only because the shop was still a place of hellish horrors for him—a place where watchmakers were so to say razed to the ground—but because if he discovered any cheating, he would not be able to do much about it, at most, write his findings up somewhere and then still have to see whether they were taken account of. But, all in all, he did not think that the business was in bad hands.

It was already late, past eleven, when he saw the dark figure with bowed head climb the servant's stair. The electric lights in the passage were particularly dim, one of them was even broken. He himself was standing in front of the door of the loft stairs, which he had reached by a somewhat irregular route up between two beams of the sitting-room ceiling and then by a few swimming strokes in the wood to the left; he knew from experience that in this way he would come out exactly at the loft door with the least possible loss of time, and on some evenings he amused himself by barring the girls' way as they went off to bed, to look once more into their faces in the uncertain light, as if it were a lonely goodnight kiss, when his wife, usually still downstairs, was not present. But he was too late, the girls were already in the back bedroom which he did not wish to enter because they always immediately began to undress; then there was a whirlwind of arms and legs and white clothes, finally one or the other came flying off over their heads, and then they flopped into bed, cackling—all habits from the time they were little girls. So he stood in front of the loft door and looked at the door of his wife's bedroom—formerly his also and now his still if he had wished, although he promised himself wretchedly little of it—and heard the

stairs creak under a man's slow step. The assistant appeared, turned the corner of the passage, shuffling, his hands in his pockets, apparently deep in thought; he was clearly not a talkative man; no longer young, not much shorter than the watchmaker and with clothes that seemed strangely familiar to Albertus Cockange. He stood looking for a moment like someone who is just about to call down over his shoulder; then he steered toward the first bedroom door, opened it and entered the room, leaving the door ajar. He turned on the light, sighed, blew out his breath. A chair creaked. All this was extremely strange, even frightening, for what did the man intend, and were there no valuables or even money locked away in the bedroom? Cockange lacked the courage to peep in; and then his attention was already drawn to the continuation of this unexpected scene. It was his wife who now came upstairs, stumping as usual. When she stood in the passage, a loud tinkling of cups could be heard from the students' rooms, whereupon she listened for a moment at the partition door, automatically fumbling open some snaps on her skirt; the watchmaker guessed at the conflict between her coarse fingers, her thick nails and the sharp-edged little buttons that ought rather to have been in a watch than on such a skirt. And he guessed more when she steered resolutely toward the lighted door crack. He guessed an astonishing amount as he stood in front of the closed door, a few moments later. He suppressed the thought of entering and having a peep, and he departed to the loft where he belonged.

He did not much mind. Perhaps they were right; marriage plans would only increase the assistant's devotion; and his wife seemed to him too sensible not to have seen to it that he had marriage plans. It was perhaps a little shameless so near the girls. The occurrence, which was not repeated for some time, as if the man had taken over not only the work and perhaps the business but also the conjugal rhythm of his predecessor, brought the advantage for Cockange that he began to feel much less guilty toward his wife and his whole family. By his disappearance he had harmed or could harm them; now they were all quits. The fact that the man wore one of his suits, even his best suit, could indicate that he would not be taken into the business as a partner well provided with capital; it also indicated the presence of certain feelings in his wife who had never been very ready to help, that is to say, feelings toward the newcomer. Reverence in the matter of worn clothes might have played a somewhat larger

role, he thought bitterly, but he was quickly reconciled by the reflection that the solution was also the best for the girls. He determined to leave the house for ever before the wedding took place.

Albertus Cockange did not again see the assistant, who slept on the camp bed in the workshop every night now, and as the suit was the only thing he had been able to place, he had no clear-cut impression of the man. Besides this, he began to pay more and more attention to other things, which were going on in the sitting-room and which touched him more than a watch business that flourished or not and a conjugal fidelity that was preserved or not. The fact that he still remained sitting in the corner of the room had a different reason from the one he had deluded himself into believing in the beginning. He did not keep aloof in order to have a better survey but because he feared nothing so much as bodily contact with people, especially with these people, his own flesh and blood. If he came close to them he might not be able to resist making use of his new capacity and simply float and fall through them, which seemed unbearable to him in the case of his father, indecent in that of his daughters and repugnant in that of his wife, although his brain told him that they would know as little of such passing of the invisible as he himself. His feeling forbade him to approach them closer than about four paces. Instead of solid bodies against which one could bump and which one had to evade, it was human abysses that one had to avoid for opposite reasons. It would also, for instance, have been indecent in the eyes of the watchmaker, who apparently had many more scruples than when he was still visible, to stare at them from close by; perhaps it was precisely to resist this temptation that he always stayed as short a time as possible in the sitting-room and quickly withdrew again after gathering some data or information, or what he considered as such. While falling down human abysses would not have been much more than clumsiness or a defiance of the laws of nature, looking long and searchingly from so close that he could imagine he was breathing with their breath, seeing with their visible eyes, represented something that he longed for violently and at the same time feared as an enslavement from which he would not be able to free himself again, a morbid but overwhelming desire. Stare so long that they had to look back and yet see nothing! And then think: they don't see me; they don't see anything; they are stupid and fat and grasp nothing; there are places where they can't go, even with their glances, places as close to them as I am now.

That seemed to him amends for much; but he would remain clinging to them as with suckers, because the feeling after the parting, when the one who was stared at regained his former preponderance, seemed worse to him than anything else in the world.

But how great was his terror, his horror, when he noticed that this vampire-like staring had long been practised in this house. Formerly Bible evenings used to be held regularly in the circle of Cockange's acquaintances; he himself was sufficiently versed in the Scripture to consider this a pleasure, but on the other hand there was his wife in her dull ignorance who seized these evenings to ridicule him or to expose his ignorance, which was very simple for her as she had the book in front of her and then heard the lesson. The atmosphere of an assembly of elders, of which the little evenings were a free imitation, then turnd into that of a fairly vulgar confirmation class. Preferably Albertus' wife hurled prophets and sequences at him and then when he did not answer, remained reasonably content for the rest of the evening. The blind old father was always present and was allowed to stay up late, as he was on the occasion of the first resumption of the time-honored custom after Cockange's accident, the first at least in their house. First he went down to see whether everything was in order and whether his father was sitting comfortably in the big armchair with some hot wine in front of him; it also interested him whether the visitors would speak about him, but in this he was disappointed. The assistant was not there; possibly the man was irreligious—the matter of entering the bedroom also seemed to point to a lack of scruples. At nine o'clock he came again to look. They were occupied with Ruth, and everything was going splendidly. His wife interrupted nobody, neither during the reading aloud nor during the interpretation, and improvised little sermons that everyone was allowed to offer at will. He then remained in the loft until a quarter past eleven, listening to whether the girls came home from a party to which they had been invited and listening to the students just beneath him, who seemed also to be busy discussing, even if other subjects. By the sound of voices and banging of doors he heard that the guests were leaving; he waited, because he thought he could hear by the conduct of the students that the girls had by chance come home: pushing up a window and calling down. But if they were drunk they might also have the impertinence to call after the departing guests. No, it had not been the girls. Everything was quiet again. A little later he went down for the third time, suddenly worried about his father who had now to be put to bed

by his wife, so worried and even impatient that to save time he entered the sitting-room between the two beams and thus caught full sight, at an angle from above, of what was going on at that moment. The two people were sitting opposite each other at a table, his wife behind the Bible, her hands supported on either side of it like a pulpit orator, her eyes fixed on the blind eyes of the old man, whose right hand was groping for his wine glass. Cockange knew that on such evenings, once over his sleepiness, he needed wine, or thought he did. But as soon as his hand neared the glass, the woman bent forward and put it a little farther away. Apparently thinking he was alone in the room, the old man, mumbling, again began his search. But then the terrible thing happened. The woman rose slowly, still with her hands on the table, still staring at the blind eyes with a burning hatred, so unbearable, so obstinate and complacently convinced of her own right, so scathing, that it seemed to the watchmaker witnessing this scene with beating heart not far from his father, that she could at any moment strangle the old man across the table without a trace of remorse or even of fear of punishment. Never had he known that she was possessed of such hatred, even if the old man did give a lot of trouble. Bent far over the table, she pressed against the Bible with her fat belly, just staring as if her eyes would come out again at the other side of the old head where there were a few foolish, yellowish wisps of hair that Albertus could well see. She could go no further. But now she began to make faces, to threaten with lips and teeth and with her jaw, while the old man mumbled and looked for his glass and missed it and stared into the emptiness in front of him. She seized the glass, put it to her lips to empty it and then—this too belonged to the derision—replaced it on the table just in front of his chest between his arms while his right hand was still groping much further forward to the left and right.

Without realizing what he was doing, Albertus ran round the table and stood next to her. He extended his invisible right arm, which was trembling much more than that of the childish old man on the other side, and wrote as large as possible on the open page of the Bible that was now almost entirely under the woman's belly: "Stop that confounded nagging!" This approach cost him an enormous self-conquest. I'll have my hand in her in a minute, he thought, and then there'll be letters inside her. Even for such pestering, this struck him as too cruel a retribution. He would have preferred to choose for this purpose the chapter about the writing on the wall, but there was no question of choice, for he

could no more turn over pages than box his wife's ears, kick or scold her; it was Ruth, and Ruth it remained, and after all the place made no difference. He waited tensely to see what the consequences might be. With a grin full of malicious joy, which tried to become coarsely, maternally teasing when she heard the street door bang, she snapped her first finger at the old man's ear without touching him. For this movement she had to bend so far over that the Bible shifted and came to lie at a slant, and when she raised herself to resume her former position, she lost her balance for a moment and with her body turned over at least a hundred pages, which happened easily, for the book, still fairly new, did not stay open very well. Suddenly the girls came in, and Albertus Cockange hastily got out of the way while they moved toward his wife, flushed, chattering, fresh from the night air.

So this was his house. No house, indeed, for a man who had the world before him and the place to himself if he wished. Again the old plans raised their heads, and the following evening, very early, wantonly neglecting the natural style of the architecture and sally-ports, he set off at a great pace, cut through clothes-lines, beams, tie-beams and roofing tiles, touching everything he could, and raised himself in the sunny air above the roof with birds round or through him, and a solitary butterfly. Spring! Now what? Quickly his feeling of power grew, making him forget all humiliation by assistants, devilish daughters-in-law, refractory Bible pages. After all, what he was doing now no one could imitate. Rising still higher, he obtained a general view of the canal, the young green that almost completely filled the gully. Then the water appeared and through the hazy branches he saw the cobblestones and the butcher and baker. Perhaps this was beautiful. The sun stood quietly at the end of the row of houses, of which he saw more and more roofs, red mountains of rocks with moss and the glacial grottoes of dripping kennels and over everything, doves and crows and a single sea-gull moving off to sea. Courtyards came into view, gardens became square, outer walls, in perspective, impossibly narrow. He had no plan, merely enjoyed the power and the movement and his own crystal transparency. More and more roofs; then the town lay before him, girded by the green of boulevards, the blue of distant hills. He made a quarter turn in the air and observed the towers of the cathedral above which he began to rise.

But then an unpleasant empty feeling tore through him. He suddenly realized that he must on no account lose sight of the

roof of his house if he wanted to go further. Had he not lost sight of it already? Probably he had strayed too far to the right; the foolish thought even stole over him that the wind had hold of him, blowing from the west, judging by the trees and the smoke. By making himself limp, he descended some tens of metres and again caught sight of the canal gully, remembering some details of it that he had just noticed. As the roofs were all alike, there was nothing left to do but to let himself drop further and to investigate one roof after another or, as a last resource, to go down to the canal and upstairs through the students' door, his eyes rigidly turned from the shop. Just when he had begun to carry out this plan, holding his breath the while and thus probably aiding the relaxation of his muscles, he discovered on a roof some little human figures, little men waving their arms. He steered a bit nearer but, before recognizing their faces, realized that he had found his house. Then he also saw who it was: the tall student with the superior air and the most affected voice of the three, and the short, fat one who always posed as the tall one's satellite. Although something told him that here danger threatened his peace of mind and that it was not for nothing that until now he had avoided the students and their rooms as carefully as the shop and the workroom and that he ought to use this warning to float further, never to return, he paid close attention to their demeanor, wondering at their quick movements, as of young animals, bears for instance, which had at the same time, something indescribably scoundrelly—a knavery of the species, not especially of these young gentlemen, an innocent but therefore all the more dangerous knavery.

In spite of this, he thought it would amuse him, at least if he did not have to reckon with a loosened tile. Up the slanting roof with gymnastic shoes, then feats with one leg in the air and, meanwhile, shady little songs; but that was nothing; that was even comical. But after these more or less unimportant stunts, they became wanton. They let themselves down, beating the tiles with their fists, sang down the gutter, kicking viciously to destroy it. In this way they approached the back of the house where the tall one a few minutes later lay down on his stomach in order to stare down over the gutter pipe. Just below him was the little courtyard. Behind him stood his satellite, yelling and dancing like an old woman. But the tall one kept still and, when the other nudged him, made signs with his hand that he did not wish to be disturbed.

Albertus Cockange on the ridge of the roof, now also moved to

the back gable and immediately saw what had attracted the attention of the student. It was nothing in the little courtyard or in the neighbors' gardens. It was just between the courtyard and the gutter, it was on the first floor, by the bedroom window where at that moment his youngest daughter was putting her head out and looking up. She was quite flushed, blinking behind her spectacles in the strong light; but the eyes themselves were turned to the student obliquely above her; immovable, appealing and in love, those blue eyes looked through the curtain of blinks like a ray of light through restless waves. And this look was answered; there was no possible doubt! What a play of eyes, what a shameless exposure of the pupils; it made Albertus Cockange turn hot and cold and above all anxious, more anxious than angry. After such looks one could expect anything. There was no longer a question of wantonness or playfulness, although the fat student still stood carrying on behind the love-maker; and this was no first sly attempt at approach; no, it was, with this spring weather, a sealing of countless meetings of eyes and hands that had preceded it. The student who was otherwise so cocksure was almost as flushed as the girl. By God, in a minute the two faces would become detached and unite in one red glowing globe, shooting rays. If after such looks one pushed such a young man into hell and the girl into heaven, they would still be able to come together. And he was powerless. As father powerless, and as invisible father still more so. This staring, though it did not last longer than twenty seconds, was much more painful than what he had witnessed the previous evening.

Like a harpy he fluttered through the house that morning. He went to places where he had never before been and especially again and again into the rooms of the students with the significant disorder: cigarette ends and scholarly exercise books. They had gone out. Wherever he came in the house, except in the shop and the workroom, something could go wrong or was just going wrong. The business, the money, the childishness of his father, his wife's debauched cruelty that would burst out one day, the assistant who would desert her, the foot-warmer over which his father could fall, what the neighbors said of the students, what the students said of his daughters—an endless torment for Albertus Cockange's spirit to which all serenity had become foreign since the happenings on the roof. If he could only express himself! That was the worst: to be the conscience of a whole household and not to be able to pronounce the word that would hold back from destruction the people assembled there. He came upon

things that made the heart in his body, his invisible heart in his invisible body, turn. Unutterable forms of distress. Dead flies in places where nobody ever came, but which were there all the same. Cigarette ashes in food, absolute and infallible. Holes as large as fists in his father's socks. And everything connected with the girls. He found out, and an unbearable remorse harassed him because he had let this custom become deeply rooted, that the girls did the students' rooms and made their beds. Now that he accounted for it he realized that this was after all no work for his wife, but what sins, what horrors were there that could not be explained away? The more one spied, the more one discovered.

Finally, two days later, again in the morning, he discovered what he wanted to discover. He had let himself down into the students' room in the front part of the house at this special hour, the hour of doing the rooms. For he had made up his mind not to miss it for a single day. At first the students' rooms seemed deserted—his daughter was not yet there, everything was in disorder and he was annoyed by this provoking slovenliness that really seemed to have no other purpose than to be unpleasant to less slovenly people. Then, suddenly, he heard whispering behind him. He wanted to ignore it by first looking in the other two students' rooms; finally it seemed the best plan to move in their direction with his back to them and then to turn round with a jerk. Indescribable moments followed. From very close by, closer than he had dared to come to any human being in his new life, he spied, in horrible self-torment, the student and the girl, leaning toward each other in a corner of the old sofa. Without any other wish than to see, to see all, he was, in the most abnormal way—the short distance particularly was something insane, as if one sat with one's nose on a panorama—witness of an amorous play that was perhaps new to the two, but that looked as if it would lead quickly to an irreparable end. The student, at least, was kissing as if his life depended on it. Cockange's daughter pulled herself to him and pushed him away with almost the same movement of the arm. For half a minute she sank into the sleep of a thousand years' of the fairy tale, tender, lonely, willing to die. The student said she was sweet, whereupon she acted brusquely and wildly, taking off her spectacles, while the student looked at the window as if he wanted to pull down the blind. And at all this the father looked with a taste in his mouth as if, although invisible, he was about to decompose. For it was death in life that he was experiencing, the death of old, long-cherished feelings, the sinking away of all support, and that was so not be-

cause the panting piece of shamming there was his daughter whom he had to protect, but because he desired consummation of himself with all his soul. There would have to be an end, somehow, an end to the tormenting doubt and the care for others —the visible ones would have to fend for themselves. His daughter was the sacrifice on the altar of his peace of mind and like every sacrifice, her approaching downfall gave enjoyment, and this enjoyment shamed him, and this shame increased his powerlessness, which in its turn made him long for peace of mind.

At last Albertus Cockange awoke from his ill-fated trance. This must on no account continue! It was his duty as a father to interfere. He hastened to the wall, the papered part above the more and more suspiciously rocking sofa, he bent halfway over the couple, taking every precaution not to touch them, and wrote with trembling but huge letters: "Hilda! Take care! Your father." Running through the room, he scribbled exercise books, and the young gentleman's letters lying about, full of the same warning. "Hilda, don't do that to me! Your father," or "He will make you unhappy, Hilda. Think of your mother." Hereupon he scratched two more walls full of huge letters, but it did not help. Like a caged bird he flew round struggling with ebullitions as ridiculous as they were inappropriate: to write on their hands, on her skirt, to throw himself upon them, to run through them in the hope that they would notice it. Bah! then perhaps they would kiss each other in the place where his liver was! He was powerless. In an attack of desperate fury he struck the back of a chair with his hand, and struck through it. Would the boy be such a brute as to seduce this girl in front of his eyes? My God, what should he do?

But then he realized what was his only chance and his daughter's too. He would have to try and become visible again! At any price! As visible father he would storm avengingly into this room and throw the young scoundrel out. It had to be done. As he had become invisible by a hand and a watch with a piece of paper in it, so could he now try the opposite by means of the same objects which might probably be found in the shop; only too well did he remember where his wife had thrown the thick paper and the sheet on which formulas were perhaps written or hints to invisible watchmakers who had had enough of it. To see the shop again would be terrible, contact with the assistant probably disagreeable. But his child was worth it. Without further hesitation he calculated at which place he would pass through the floor; he let himself go limp, felt the "wood-worm tingling"

rise higher and higher like water round a bather's legs, while his legs were already sprawling into the shop. He closed his eyes in order not to have to see anything more of the sofa. With closed eyes, now for other reasons, he fell into the shop and landed gently on his feet, immediately stiffening so that he should not sink further. He opened his eyes.

He found himself in the shop, so long shunned, so little changed. Rows of clocks, with the stupidity of their dial plates and the safety of their mahogany cases, ticked frantically, a cuckoo clock that would choke in the entire nature and the kingdom of the birds, if one didn't take care; watches that did not indicate a smaller time but the same time, which was after all strange. Wrist watches! A wide bundle of sun rays on the alarm clocks for bedside tables with radium stripes. Albertus Cockange took all this in at one glance, for he wanted or his soul wanted to know whether this shop had remained the same, not less dangerous but also not more dangerous than at first. After this glance, which embraced all and decided nothing, he turned to the counter. Behind it stood a figure in a long, gray dust coat repairing a watch, slightly bent forward, with steady skilled hands and a completely rigid forehead between his eyebrows, a forehead that looked like the figure XII on a dial plate and that immediately showed Cockange what this man was not and would never be able to be, even if God jumbled all professions and their representatives and subrepresentatives together. For this man was not the assistant whom he had expected in the shop. Why was he not the assistant? Because it was himself.

Indeed, the invisible Albertus Cockange who had just tumbled down from the student's room stood there looking as into a mirror. With this difference: the man opposite him not only was visible, unlike himself, but worked and showed no trace of the bottomless astonishment to which he himself was a prey. They were the same but behaved differently. Attentively, with the attention of a child that sees something for the first time, he watched how he himself, or his image, or the real Albertus Cockange, or however one wants to call the figure behind the counter, picked up a little wheel with an extremely fine pair of tweezers, held it against the light and very gravely blew through it, through all the tiny teeth. That was formerly his work! This mouth had been his mouth, this nose his nose and that pepper-and-salt mustache had often reminded him of approaching old age. The hollows in the cheeks, the wart on the left of the forehead—everything was there. And the same wooden movements. There

could be no doubt; it was the living—even if also a little dead—it was the plain, living watchmaker Albertus Cockange, deprived of nothing, standing there before him and making the movements that belonged to his trade and that he would continue to make until his death.

A feeling of respect overcame him as he slowly approached the counter, a feeling almost of pity. He felt a desire to salute. For the first time he understood everything about his life and why it had undergone this change—especially this new change, which was as if he had become invisible once again, still more invisible, now not chemically affected by witchcraft but terminated by one blow. What was this man there, absorbed in himself, how had he put all his soul into that watch, into one little wheel of it, into one little tooth of the wheel and the dust that stuck to it? A slightly foolish, a slightly inanimate man, this Albertus Cockange, who would remain behind alone and from whom he must now take his leave.

For that was the decision he had made: not a minute longer, not a minute on any one of those ever ticking clocks, would he remain in this house. He had nothing more to do here. He had become detached from everything. As the clock ticks at home, so it fortunately ticks nowhere else, nowhere would things hang over his head as here, ridiculous duties and responsibilities of which nobody on earth could acquit himself, duties that one had best transfer to some figure, a puppet with a striking likeness to one.

Though the feeling of respect and pity had not grown less, he ran close to the counter, picked up a made-out bill, which lay there under the eyes of his double, stuck out a finger and wrote: "Sir, your daughter is being seduced upstairs." While writing he had some difficulty in imagining that this warning concerned the youngest daughter of Albertus Cockange who was so absorbed in watches. Was it really the youngest? No, he must not start doubting that—it was a certain youngest daughter of a certain Albertus Cockange. Then he took a little run, flew through the pane of the show-case, through the shop window, between the green branches of the trees and disappeared into space.

Translated by Jo Mayo

F. C. Terborgh

EL GRAN CAÑON

IN 1527, SIX YEARS AFTER THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO, A HANDFUL OF adventurers left the Spanish settlement, which was then already flourishing, and set out to a new Mexico, in search of the seven northerly towns and of new gold. The troop consisted of forty-eight foot-soldiers, seven horsemen, ten harquebusiers and an almost equal number of Indians. The route went north-west; a message that the twenty-ninth degree of latitude had been crossed reached the Governor; after that there were no further reports, and not a single member of the expedition was ever seen again. The west coast was never reached, and the Commission, later charged with an investigation, expressed the surmise that the marching route had been changed, contrary to instructions, to north-east, upon rumors of gold and the proximity of the seven towns.

The expedition had met no opposition; the terrain was easy and it was possible to lengthen the stages. The journey went through wide, steadily rising valleys, to high plateaux, through steppes to new valleys, sometimes through forests. One of these forests was particularly dense and extensive. After two days it became lighter; through tree-trunks and brushwood gleamed an endless steppe and the soft glow of bluish-pink evening light; on the horizon, mountains. Diego Perez, the captain, rode ahead with Don Huarte Padura to look for a suitable camping place. Near the last trees the horsemen stopped, impressed by the wide plain stretching to the horizon. The captain took off his hat, passed his hand over forehead and hair and looked long at the last rays of the sun on the mountains. He had never spoken much—nothing superfluous—but this distant view made him almost loquacious. "It reminds one of Estremadura, Huarte; sunset at home. It is as large as Spain." Then he twisted his body, uttered a short cry and slipped from his horse. The other stared. A snake was hanging down from a branch, its head where the captain's neck must have been. The creature had bitten. Its head was not an arm's length from Huarte's face. He grabbed at it with his mailed hand, but the creature was quicker and stronger. It slid along the steel arm, along the shoulder plate, wound itself

lithely round his neck and bit him in the temple before he was able to strangle the monster in his iron grip.

When the foot-soldiers arrived at the edge of the forest, they found only two corpses: one with his face down, convulsed, his right hand on his neck which was bent backwards; the other on his back, clenching a still living snake in his hands. The troop had lost its leaders.

Half a mile further, they pitched camp on the plain. Night fell; nobody spoke. They placed the dead in the middle of the camp and began throwing up earth-walls as if they had to defend themselves against a still invisible enemy. The priest tried to make the hands of the dead grasp wooden crosses upon their chests, but each time the dead hands let the crucifix go. One seemed to be wanting to grab at his neck, the other at a snake that had long been beaten into an unrecognizable mass in the dust. Two candles were lit at each head in the dead-calm night. The priest prayed; sometimes the yellow flames flickered. He had come along with the others to convert heathens, thousands of them. They remained out of sight. God gave no profit, only loss. Fires burned in a large circle; the men sat round them, silent; occasionally one spat into the flames, the spittle hissing for a moment. A one-eyed man with decayed teeth suddenly raised his riding-crop and flogged two Indians who had been talking softly to one another and would not repeat their words. Everywhere there was the smell of betrayal. Three men ran a little way into the darkness in order to listen better, but heard nothing: the rustling of a thistle, the cry of an animal at the edge of the forest. It remained quiet all night. The stars sparkled; no wind rose. In the gray of the morning most of them rolled themselves into their cloaks for a short, restless sleep.

A stone's throw from the camp a grave was dug the next morning, deep, so that wild animals should not grub it up. A rough cross was carpentered, two names upon it, and a hurried mass was said. Then they again waited for the night; but the second night, too, everything remained quiet. When nothing had changed on the empty horizon by the fourth morning, they saw that nothing threatened them. The danger was gone, and so was discipline.

Conflict arose about the route to be chosen; conflict about the succession in command. Nothing had been foreseen; no opportunity had offered itself to show generalship, and lack of experience allowed dispute and vanity to grow rank. Two camps had formed; one chose the one-eyed sergeant who claimed experience in earlier expeditions and found cursing and lashing the most

useful virtues; the other backed a runaway student, Don Pedro Carvajal de Susa, young, not strong and without experience, but calm and with the often unfounded authority of taciturn people. The majority declared itself for experience. Susa remained silent. It was decided to continue the journey to the north-east under the blustering leadership of the sergeant.

The steppe turned out to be more extensive than was originally thought. The mountains rose very slowly. The daily marches grew shorter and slower; discipline had relaxed altogether. It was not a compact column that marched over the plain but a thin line of scattered groups, some further apart than a voice could carry.

Susa was among the foremost. He had started walking to spare his horse and walked slowly behind three archers. The animal pulled at its reins and wanted to graze; sometimes he allowed it to do so for a moment. The priest caught up with him, said something, but received no answer. He did not persevere, but walked on silently for half an hour, sweating in his greasy brown cowl. Then he began again:

"What do you think? When can we reach the towns? Will they be large? Densely populated? Larger than in the South?"

"Did you think, priest," Susa snarled at him, "that they would be kneeling in the market-place there, waiting for you, dying for your gospel?"

The other considered it advisable to pay no attention to the affront.

"God's word can only bring them joy, when once they have heard it."

The sun burned on constricting breastplates; tough steppe-grass and thistles, sticking to their boots, vexed the foot-soldiers. Sometimes one of them would lose his balance under the heavy armor, stumble and rise again, cursing. Rarely a word was said. Thirst, and the uncertainty regarding the distance to the next water-course, began to torment the men. Again suspicion about threatening betrayal developed, as it had in the night after the disaster, but now hidden, gnawing at their inmost souls, inciting them to accuse each other blindly at the approach of the first vague danger. Weariness, exertion provoked spite; dully the spirit of rebellion rose. But nothing happened. At sunset the heat diminished; cool winds brought relaxation, and in the nightly encampment there again reigned unconcerned quiet.

On the fifth day they found clear, cool water in a fairly shallow

ravine. They resolved to stay there for two days. Indians and foot-soldiers had gone hunting; they had been lucky. The booty was roasted over a crackling fire at night. The rations were ampler than usual; there was even excess. The sergeant's immediate circle played dice; future booty was played away, and one of the men had got a guitar from goodness knows where. Melancholy, raucous songs died away into the night. Forbearance had come over the men; hardly anyone cursed. Even the grumblers grew talkative. It was no longer a handful of adventurers, greedy for gold, who were bivouacking. They had become peasants again, resting after a hard, monotonous day. Their thoughts strayed to their homes, their fields, their poverty and their parents, to misery and to long-forgotten faces grown friendlier and more attractive with the passing of time. They made plans and dreamed. At the bottom of all the dreams lay gold. The priest sat on a stone, sunk in thought. His zeal to convert had waned; he was back in his youth, in his village. He mused on the sacraments of marriage and baptism, on work for a new family, the dream of a new happiness, and was in a mood of conciliation, even toward the baleful metal. The student lay in the grass on the other side of the fire, with his legs drawn up, his hands clasped under his head, and chewing a grass stalk. He let others do the talking, but after a time the priest asked him also, the youngest:

"And you—what are you going to do with the gold?"

The other did not turn round.

"With the gold?" he said slowly. "One can't do anything with gold. It dragged the men from the bridges of Tenochtitlan into the water and drowned them like cats. Those that remained squandered it. It passed through their hands, rolled on. Nothing were they able to retain. The first to find it were murdered, or died, forgotten. There is no blessing on that gold, as little as there is on a stolen heritage."

"And yet it is worth setting out for, and risking one's life," mocked the priest.

Susa half sat up and looked at him. "Why, man, have you never, at home in your stuffy cell, looked out of the window in the evening over the empty fields where the sun sets in the distance and thought that behind that there are more fields, hundreds of miles away, and behind that the sea and still farther, other plains and mountains? Inconceivable immensities to who knows what limits? And did you never feel a longing then to set out for them, further and further, not in order to win or rob, but for the journey itself, till an end is reached? A wall or a vaporous

abyss without light, or an unexpected glorious death?" He spat contemptuously into the fire, rose and walked a little way into the darkness. The priest smiled at the other's extreme youth. Hardly one of the men had listened; each was busy with his own approaching, great, exceptional good fortune. The cry of an animal came from the distance; the fire had died down to a mere glow. One after another rolled himself into his cloak; then there was nothing but the great, wide night.

They reached the mountains; the steppe came to an end. The trees that were scattered at first soon stood closer together, forming a forest that hid the mountain-tops from sight. Beyond that the rocks diminished, a fertile valley followed; soon it branched out into several valleys. It was again decided to rest for a time and to send scouts ahead to look for the best way. Five men were picked by lot. Three men returned after a few days, worn out, perspiring, covered with blood, and reported a town; blocks of gray houses, built in the shape of terraces on the slopes of the mountain, fortress-like towers and rickety wooden bridges, wall behind wall, and a maze of winding roads. In the background a pyramid temple, just as in the south in Mexico. They had seen everything from a hill, had been attacked by Indians and had beaten their retreat with difficulty. Two comrades had been lost sight of.

A feverish suspense took possession of the men. The end of the expedition was in sight, the first of the gold towns reached. One more day they waited for those who had gone astray, but who did not return. In the plain before them everything remained quiet. Then the troop slowly began to move. Discipline had returned. Thirst for gold, and danger, again made each conscious of what was expected of him. They were again first-rate soldiers, quiet and hard, Spaniards with that almost incredible contempt for death and a courage which was nothing but a mixture of healthy peasant obstinacy and boundless pride.

Toward evening scouts saw the first Indians. They spent the night on a hill where a surprise attack would have been difficult, listening and waiting in the penetrating cold of mountain mists. The following afternoon, as they approached the edge of the forest, the long-expected war-cry broke out. In the twinkling of an eye the plain was full of feather-tufts and naked bodies. The fight was short. A living wall of shields was formed between the rocks and tree trunks, the harquebusiers at the back, the horsemen in the middle of the ring. The first torrential wave of arrows and darts was caught by the shields. Covered with spikes like

porcupines they were dragged down by the new weight, leaving the bodies exposed. They answered with a thundering volley, and horror spread among the savages. Then the horsemen broke into the confusion and rushed, mowing down like raving demons such as had never been seen before, right through the groups of howling Indians. In a flash everything was over. Desperately the crowd fled back to the edge of the forest, followed by horsemen and foot-soldiers. The groaning wounded and the dead remained on the field.

The war council, held on the spot, resolved to move on, to lose no time, but to break down all resistance in one fast, wild march. The one wounded man was carefully concealed. The legend of invulnerability had to be maintained at all costs.

The forest was not deep. The troop found a wide valley behind it; foliage trees in steppe grass and fleeing game in the distance. They remained encamped in the field by great fires. No one thought of sleep. The next day, when the troop had long been under way, five Indians were seen near a clump of trees. They were making signs, apparently wanting to negotiate. Interpreters were sent ahead, and soon soldiers had encircled the group. The dead and wounded had already been searched in vain for gold; nothing was found on the state robes of the negotiators either. The men asked about gold, but the Indians apparently did not understand the interpreter. One pointed to the south-west with a vague gesture. Their evasion was considered a ruse.

The sergeant pushed his way through the quarreling soldiers, stood in front of the negotiators in martial posture, his mailed fist on his hip, and asked for an explanation. His men drew back, and the oldest of the Indians understood; he knelt down, caught hold of the sergeant's foot and placed it on his own bowed neck. A triumphant murmur rose from the crowd; festive salutes were fired right beside the ears of the terrified savages, and immediately a marching column was formed, the sergeant, the harquebusiers and the priest in front.

The valley became narrower; it seemed endlessly long between the more densely wooded hillsides. Indians bobbed out of the brushwood, even women and children, and an ever lengthening train followed the conquerors. The sun already stood low over the mountain-tops when the town was seen on the left hillside. The shadows lengthened in the valley, the sky grew a darker blue, steeped in a pale pink light, the color of the feather headdress of the Indians. On the towers and temples lay a ruddy glow

like the reflection of a fire. The troop marched faster and faster, their desire for gold driving them forward; no one thought of danger. The path grew steeper and wound over bridges, along empty terraces and deserted defences, between rocklike walls, and then unexpectedly widened into a spacious square.

The goal had been reached; for a short span of time authority revived. The troop formed ranks, knelt down bareheaded during the priest's prayer of thanksgiving; but the men soon ceased to listen and suspiciously followed the Indians' movements with their eyes. The sergeant took possession of the town in the name of the King of Castille and Aragon; and below the black cross, hastily erected in the middle of the square, the priest began his first sermon. The interpreter translated, but he did not understand the meaning himself; an ever denser crowd, packed at the edge of the square, listened in silence. The exhortations of the priest became more and more fiery, almost threatening. Slowly night fell in the square, and the stillness round about it became oppressive. Finally an old *cacique* stepped forward, white, with bent figure, supported by two young men. Then shots rang out in the approaches, and wild confusion spread in the throng of people.

Soldiers had found the heads of their two missing comrades, still dripping blood, planted on poles in front of a temple. The slaughter began. A roaring din arose; cries of distress from women and children, gunpowder smoke and soon the thick smoke of conflagration filled the square. The ruddy glow leapt from every corner, lugubriously illuminating the valley and the endless procession of Indians fleeing to the forests. In the drab morning only smoke rose from the charred ruins. Occasionally a shot was fired. The town was dead. But no gold had been found.

When it was day, the heaps of ruins were thoroughly searched. The result was frightening. In as far as the houses were not burnt down, they were miserable huts, gray and empty; even the temples were empty. All that was found were idols of roughly hewn stone and poor furniture. The food that was collected did not suffice for two days, and a deep dismay came over the troop. Charred beams, and corpses piled in the narrow alleys, was all that the laborious journey of many weeks had yielded. The shrill cry of a bird sometimes came from the edge of the forest, above the men, and was answered from the other side. The men feared betrayal and decided to march on.

Not far above the town the valley turned into a ravine. A path led up through the dry bed of a river to more, denser forests;

beyond that again, a wide barren prairie. But this time there were no mountains to be seen on the horizon. Again quarrels ensued. The majority of the group wanted to stay at the edge of the forest in the hope of hunting quarry and not risk the hot journey over the steppe. The region was apparently growing wilder and more barren. They had better wait; some even wanted to return.

In the growing confusion, the student finally spoke:

"Men! What was the purpose of the expedition? To find the way to the west, the way to the sea. Then why not march on? Is this steppe the first we have seen? Have not others already been crossed? Does so little frighten off a Spaniard? The forest behind us is full of savages. We have heard the cry of a bird and the answer in the distance. They will come back with tenfold supremacy. Tomorrow; perhaps already tonight. Does anyone really believe in safety here, in front of a forest teeming with Indians? Forward, men! Santiago! Viva el Rey!"

He drew his sword and stormed ahead, straight into the empty steppe. But in the troop nobody moved. Outside, in the waving lyme-grass, he turned round and saw that he had remained alone. Shouts of laughter rose from the crowd. At that moment the fate of the expedition was sealed. Don Pedro Carvajal de Susa raised himself high in the saddle, cast a long, contemptuous glance at the troop and rode on, slowly and gravely as if in a procession. An embarrassed silence fell upon the men; then two horsemen and a harquebusier separated themselves from the group and followed the student; later, three Indians. None of them looked round. In the distance they melted into a thin line; then they disappeared among the thistles or into a fold of the earth. The sergeant spat when he had lost sight of them, but remained silent.

The account of those that remained behind is soon told. They wandered along the edge of the forest in an easterly direction for two days, until they thought they were safe. In the third night, Indians as innumerable as a suffocating swarm of grasshoppers stole upon them and cut them down to the last man.

Does our fate really lie in the circular course of the stars? Does our futile existence really follow their eternal orbit? Or does the heart only lift itself to their chill remotenesss shortly before the transition? Is that dully crying bird a messenger?

But does not the body still feel the caressing warmth of the earth? Does not the hand greedily grasp the bumpy sand, and does not the ear listen intently to the song of the cricket and the dying wind through long dried grass-stalks?

From the grass comes the sound of three men sleeping heavily. The student found no rest. He had lain down and then sat up again. Between his fingers ran warm, gray sand; his face was raised to the firmament where the stars sparkled in the almost tangible darkness and the great constellations ran their eternal orbits, moving on irrevocably, hour after hour, like the hands of a gigantic all-dominating clockwork. Never had this sky been so close to him, never had he experienced its depth and intoxicating infinity in such a hard and direct way. And for the first time the thought came to him that this black remoteness was more dizzy, more overwhelming than his breath-taking dreams of journeys to a shadowy distance sinking into vaporous abysses. Could they not have led his thoughts into other channels at home, in his bare study? Could they not have changed his path? The rigid irrevocability of the firmament up there only shows the emptiness of such resistance; nobody escapes his fate; all return is senseless; there is no return, for it only leads to the same end by another route.

A drowsy wind has risen again; it wafts the smell of heat and dust from still unknown distant places. Sand rustles through the prickly stalks. Susa has jumped up, stretches his strong young limbs and stares into the black void from where it must come. But there is nothing to be seen in the night. Nothing looms up in the endless darkness. He lies down again beside his comrades and after a time he too is overcome by a deep, healthy sleep.

The next morning there was again the same barren steppe and nothing reminiscent of the night. Heat and a burning sky above sulphurous sand, greenish-white; couch-grass turned yellow, and soon also limestone. The animals, tired and thirsty, began to walk unsteadily. Sometimes their hoofs knocked against hidden stones overgrown with grass; sometimes they sank into an invisible hole. Nothing bothered the troop as much as the slowly increasing thirst. On the third and the fourth day still no water was found, and nothing indicated the direction in which one should look for it. Shapes loomed in the distance. At first they looked like tree-trunks, bare and snapped off by the gale; then human shapes, adjuring, with arms uplifted. Fear and hope filled the men, hankering after change and afraid of each new disillusionment. But on drawing nearer they turned out to be cacti often higher than a man, hard and prickly. No trace of moisture. Between the stumps rattlesnakes rose menacingly, making the horses rear and, sweating with fear, gallop on wildly for a while, till they stopped again, panting and exhausted. The sun burned intensely upon the blinding, glaring sand; the men's heads grew

light; they became giddy and at the end of the fourth day they came across their own tracks again. Of the day before? Of the day before that? Who could tell? From the water bags trickled a thin stream of dreggy moisture, brown and tasting of leather. In dull despair the men decided to walk on at night in order to be able to keep their direction by the constellations. In the pale light of the waxing moon, shadows moved round them in wide circles. Foxes? Jackals? They remained too far away to be shot at. Shortly before the gray dawn, resting by a piece of rock all were overcome by a feverish sleep that did not refresh. Pale daylight spread in leaps and bounds over their camp in this desolate wilderness; their last, perhaps; perhaps already their grave.

At noon the horses had to be killed. They had collapsed, exhausted, and lay panting, foaming at the mouth and bathed in sweat, the agony of death in their bulging eyes. From their emaciated flanks, the Indians cut strips of stringy meat, hoping in this way to eke out their provisions; but the supply became spoilt on the way. Moving on, toward evening, they still saw the carcasses lying in the distance, black against the yellow sky, and vultures above them. Vultures had followed them all day.

At night the landscape changed. In the moonlight silhouettes at the horizon looked like castles, walled towns rising steeply from the plain; but on coming nearer they turned out to be limestone plateaux, erosion islands of primeval ages, purple in the pale morning light, with jet-black shadows in the crevices. The troop moved past them, futile as toys in a realm of giants. In one of the folds of the earth they found some brackish water.

In the evening of the sixth day they saw the miraculous. The terrain was again flat and in the distance gleamed a line of mountains through the hazy air. But there was something strange about these mountains. They soon looked hardly higher than the ground on which the men were walking and not far off. They rose out of a void, out of an invisible depth, as if the earth were torn in two and, in the mists on the other side, a new continent was beginning. With their eyes still turned to this strange reflection, they suddenly stood at the edge of a dizzy precipice: steep rocks, ruddy, yellowish-green and brown, and in the depths below, some water that looked like a brooklet but was surely a wide river; birds of prey hovered over the rocks below, and everywhere there was a deathlike, unearthly silence.

The man who reached the edge first, crossed himself; nobody spoke. Something like horror seized them, a hellish fear of this superhuman spectacle, more magnificent and terrible than the

wildest imagination of painters, now flooded with flaming evening light that seemed to spread over the end of the world with waning bundles of refracted rays.

The men camped on the edge of the abyss. Their exhaustion was greater than their terror. The night blotted out the picture, and sleep soon enveloped them all.

On the seventh morning, rested and sobered by a current of cool air that came from the ravines, the spectacle no longer appalled them. The light was different; the sun rose behind them, and mist blurred the distance. They would have to climb down the rocky side to reach the river, and follow the watercourse that would end somewhere at a coast, perhaps hundreds of miles away, but with certainty. Their salvation seemed assured.

The most necessary things were tied together into bundles, and straps and cords knotted into a rope, half the length of which easily reached down to the first rocky ledge below. What lay beyond that, one step deeper, was apparently no more than the same distance away. They would let themselves down, one by one, the Indians first with the bundles, then the harquebusier and the horsemen, and finally the student. They would descend, from ledge to ledge, down to the water; the work of half a day, perhaps.

The first ledge was easily reached. The second was large enough for them all, but the rope had got caught somewhere in a cleft in the rocks. An Indian pulled himself up by it in order to free it. When he was halfway up, the stone gave way. The man tried to cling to the rocks, but, struck by a stone, fell down upon his comrades. Rocks followed, first slowly, then faster, and with a thundering roar dragged six of the men along into the abyss.

Susa, pressed against the wall under a protruding lump of rock, was bruised on the shoulder by a falling piece. The greater part of the ledge on which he stood had been struck off; comrades, bundles and rope had disappeared into the abyss; not one remained alive. Two he saw, covered with blood, on a lower ledge; the others could no longer be seen.

Trembling, with a throbbing pain in his arm, he sat down, leaning against the wall, his eyes turned to the wide depths below him. So this was the end that was intended for him! This was the picture that had never loomed up completely in his daydreams but had guided his actions and his life! Horror and, at the same time, contentment filled him. Then the pain overpowered him and he lost consciousness.

In the evening he awoke. A level light lay on the sulphurous

green rocks about him; they seemed alive in the falling dusk. They moved and took on the shapes of the wild rock formations near his native town. They looked to him like the old acquaintances of his boyhood, the vast, hopeless emptiness that had dominated the first beginnings of his thought, that had made him set out to find a still vaster one. He was tired but content; he was at home again. And, as in the days of his boyhood, he inscribed irregular letters with his knife into the chalk wall beside him. They formed the name of his native town: CALATAYUD.

Translated by Jo MAYO

Adriaan van der Veen

POVERTY AND YOUTH

I. BREAD AND WORK

ONCE I DREAMED: I AWOKE ONE MORNING AND SAW THE FIRE ACROSS the way. I knew then that the long-expected was near. I woke my wife and called my sons. Outdoors we joined the leading group and ran along the street with all the others. When we got to the end, we heard shouts of joy and, round the corner, we saw the great fire. I looked at the shining faces of the younger ones. Then began the great dance. I had no fear. Three times we jigged round the fire, the fourth time we leaped into it. I felt it especially about my belly and thighs. I wallowed and stumbled around. My sons came towards me with outstretched arms. They clung to my sides. And there stood my wife, with body erect and arms outstretched. We strode solemnly towards her. Round us sounded songs of praise and happiness. All the people whirled in a wild dance. The fire was like an exciting caress and a liberating bath. Suddenly there were cries of abhorrence and fury. Slimy toads and cowardly frogs had been found and dragged from their hiding places. They were thrown into the fire and torn asunder. Dancing people by the thousands jumped on their slushy bodies. The fire licked at them and shriveled them up. As far as we could see there was a great dancing fire, with golden bodies. We walked for days and joined other groups with different-colored skins and sang songs together. Finally there was nothing but fire and people. All hiding-places, with their vermin, had been devoured.

And one day we all stood motionless in interminable rows. We

took into ourselves as much of the fire as possible and the rest we placed as a sun above us. And we turned our eyes to the earth and understood our task.

I knew when I had put down the first sentence that it would be nonsense, stupid nonsense. It is apparently impossible for me to think of anything good; because I once had the spark of a new idea and wrote a parable with success, vanity spurs me on to write. To write, spasmodically and without content, about fire, fire and once again fire. What have I to do with it? All that does not concern me. I am not a convinced Communist and I am not impressed by anarchism. And perhaps I cannot really write. My egoism clings to a poor talent for writing as an expedient for getting out of the mess. I live solely on the thought of fleeing, rending the ties and forgetting faces.

I know, of course, that this too is all idle talk. True, I am resentful; perhaps I really want to get away, but I shall never be able to do so. I am no longer capable of anything, anyway. My little room is 2 x 2 x 2 metres, and next to it is the sitting-room. And my father is so heavy, so stout, so large; and how can I write when he gets up and walks through the room, up and down, down and up? He is walking: now his body is inclining to the left, now to the right. Sometimes I catch myself staring at the wallpaper; then my mouth drops open and I move my finger in time to his heavy footsteps. And that is how it has been going on for a long time—every day. I listen, and must write. Where is my mother? She has gone out. To X or Z. And why? For money, of course. I am choking, choking with fury, choking with compassion. There I sit. I must write, for I must get out of it. Forward! You are a Communist! It is the fashion nowadays. Write an essay about the Artist and Communism. But I am sitting here in my little room 2 x 2 x 2. It is hot and a quarter to three. The sun is helping to crush me to death. Oh, I do not only listen. My sports shirt is open and I amuse myself scraping my nails along my sweating back and then picking the dirt out of them. For that matter, my hair is also too long. If I scratch hard, my nails are full of dandruff, and I throw that on my notebook instead of letters.

How long has this been going on? For three months we got eighty per cent of the salary from the union. That was three months ago. So that makes six months and two weeks. We should of course have cut our coat according to the cloth and then we should have had a little savings-bank account. That would have

been enough for two months. But we have six children (I am the eldest but one), and my father was always so heavy and good-natured, and until then he always worked and had always worked, and it looked as if he would still work for a long time; but suddenly it came to an end. We were sitting in the room. We were laughing, and talking about something. Then came the mail with a letter from the office. Oh, yes, I remember now; we were teasing Jan, whom we had seen with a girl, and he was squirming and turning red. My father was laughing heartily. When he laughs, he half lies in his armchair and throws his mouth wide open in his fat, kind-hearted way. And that is how he opened the letter. Every day letters used to come from the office with instructions and such things, and so we merely went on talking. My father was still laughing. Then he read the letter. And his face had still the grin from which he could not quickly part.

Then he sat up, creaking helplessly in his armchair, and said: "Listen to this." He said this to my mother, who was standing by the tea-table. My mother came towards us with the tea. My father was again staring at the letter. "What do they say?" my mother asked. And he read aloud: "Dear Mr. de Beer: On account of a general reorganization of our business, we regret to inform you, etc.," and this he read slowly and emphatically. He likes putting it on a bit; you should hear him on family evenings! And this pompousness could not vanish quite suddenly, however surprising the news might be. "But how can that be? But no, how is it possible!" cried my mother. My father, with astonished, naive eyes in his thick face, looked first at the letter (which he folded neatly and put into the envelope and then fetched out again), then at my mother: "Can you make that out?" And they looked at one another with faces as if, instead of a clear statement, a puzzle had been laid before them. My brothers were already taking part in the general astonishment, and there was no more need for my younger brother Jan to blush. The subject of girls was dead and buried.

At that moment I had already the same feeling with which I am sitting now in my little room. Only then it was new, and now it has been stinking for a long time. A feeling of crabbedness, of discontent, more than anything. Was it really so astonishing and strange? How many people were being sacked every week?

And at the same time, I felt a tender but fast-growing pity for that big head, that heavy body, which suddenly saw its justification for existence disappear, and for that small woman always tripping about diligently with an anxious face and wrinkled fore-

head. I should like to be above this sentimentality a thousand times. If you reflect, all these things are of no importance. And yet I know, know now, especially this afternoon, that this is a lie. I am bound, hopelessly bound. Our family is one body, and that body is wounded and suffering pain. And even for me I hate the idea of calling all these feelings together: filial love.

I know that freedom won by flight is impossible for me. Enjoyment of it would be out of the question. I am in for it now. And I simply sit here, I stand up and I crawl in here and remain sitting, brooding, mooning away my time—drying up. Now my mother is out to find money, which is needed. The stout landlord downstairs, who used to be affability personified, is turning out to be a greater cad than I thought he was. (My father even tries to muffle his footsteps when he goes downstairs, so convinced is he of his own uselessness.) And all that for the forty guilders he gets! His fat paunch at the bottom of the stairs, and my mother at the top— "But I can't do it, don't you see? Such a beautiful house in such a fine location, for such a low price! I can rent it to someone who *can* pay the rent, hi, hi, hi!" Mind you! I am in my little room, my father in the living-room, and my mother on the stairs. But that fellow is not downstairs; that fellow is sitting on us, he is driveling his words into me. What shall I do now? Run out and go from house to house, asking for money? Or kick that fat fellow to death? Which would better serve my parents?

But apparently I do not understand that for my father it is not the question of money. The fact that he no longer feels that he is the leader, that there is no longer reason for him to be pompous (which always struck me as comical, but with which he was happy in his good-natured way) is probably getting him down. He suddenly feels like a piece of useless furniture that is pushed aside. Hence his soft, affectionate, awkward bearing toward us and, sometimes, his sudden outbursts against my brothers about some slightly ill-chosen word. That is all quite usual, almost hackneyed. Seen soberly: the normal human being cannot live without the fixed norms on which he leans. But, now that it concerns my father, I cannot stand it.

Once shortly after my father was fired, there was a ridiculous quarrel between my parents. My mother thought that my father should call personally on people who might help him with connections and should not simply apply for jobs in writing. At first my father tried to pacify her with the kindly, patronizing jokes of his working days, which he forgot to omit and which, in

his opinion too, befitted only a useful, thus money-earning, member of society. This false tone irritated my mother still more and provoked violent and unmotivated reproaches. Then my father became angry. My brother, who is two years older than I, interfered in a voice that was quarrelsome from the start and took the side of my mother. The whole thing made me think of the slums, where we should infallibly land, so that I suddenly joined in shrilly with, "Shut up, God damn it!" thus showing myself to be the worst of the lot. And why this quarrel? Because my mother had been frightened by nothing the night before.

My father said that he was going to the Public Library to look through the advertisements. Usually he returned at half-past nine. At ten o'clock the Public Library closes, and at half-past ten he was not yet home. My mother had already remarked: "He is very late tonight." When he was not yet back at half-past ten, my mother, who had been looking out of the window for quite a time, made the idiotic remark that I had already expected: "You don't think he has laid hands on himself?" I was annoyed and answered roughly: "Of course; he has jumped into the water." My mother said: "He is such a strange man." My father is not a strange man, and my mother did not mean that. She meant: the situation is strange. And why did I anticipate my mother's supposition? Because I, although annoyed and ashamed, had thought the same and knew, pushing away the thought as far as I could, that my mother would express it.

After eleven my father came. He had gone to see the union secretary to settle about relief and had been detained for a long time. Then my mother, apparently unintentionally, went and stood close to my father. At first I did not know why, but then I understood suddenly the fear that my mother no doubt entertained day and night; that the family would go wrong altogether. And what fears existed? Unemployment, drunkenness and infidelity. She smelt his breath. There my father stood, a little pale, a little drooping like an old man, and, above all, uncomprehending; next to him, my mother. I almost groaned with horror at the ludicrous side of this second-rate melodramatic situation. But who will contend that a boil hurts less than a wound heroically gotten?

Not until the three months of the dole payments were over did I realize how little is needed to ruin a family financially. For us it took only the lack of 100 guilders, my father's monthly salary. Six children are enough to prevent anything of this salary from being left over, especially if one marries on the installment sys-

tem, as so many do; for years the mysterious messenger from the reliable store comes to claim his share (which becomes greater with each child). But then—how go on living without the 100 guilders? This problem we had to solve like thousands of others before us.

At the very beginning there was pity; an uncle lent money; my father's mother and family lent money, money that soon disappeared and could not be repaid, as everyone had expected. But one gets used to everything, and those who first had pity were later sick of the whining. Then the landlord could not be paid. All right, he put up with the promise of "next week, double." After that the messenger could not be paid. All right, but he would have to speak to the manager about it. And after that they and the baker and the greengrocer could not be paid. All right, then bread was bought from a strange baker, and food from strange tradespeople. And then came the electric light and the gas. And then the rent had to be skipped again, because we could not be without light and gas. And then the landlord did not put up with it any more, and there came a letter from the installment store, and the tradesmen became rude, and the health insurance crossed us off the list. We satisfied them for the time being with the proceeds of the sale of the pension insurance, which every nice family has. But that merely caused a short pause and then everything started again, hungrier than ever. And that is how it went on, for three months and three weeks. The installment company will now place the matter in the hands of its lawyer and probably have us adjudged bankrupt. My father does not say much. My mother says, "Let them have their way," and discusses with me whether they could sell the furniture. I do not know, but I am afraid. The old tradespeople are often abusive. My mother tries to appease them with fifty cents a week.

My little sister buys bread at a cheap baker's; eleven cents a loaf. He does not sell on credit; our old baker has warned him. Formerly desired as customers, now it is signaled everywhere, "Be careful!" when we approach. That's three months without 100 guilders.

As regards clothes, I once looked in the closet for my brown suit. It was at the pawnbroker's with my plus-fours. I did not say anything about it, though clothes mean much to me. My brother, whose suit (like my father's wintercoat) had also disappeared, *did* scold and loudly. I hit him and got a beating from him. He was much stronger. There was a terrible hullabaloo, partly because

my mother acted so strangely. This quarrel cost her another illusion: peace in the family.

We shall have to leave the house. Although the owner knows that he will not be able to collect his debt for the time being, he wants to get rid of us anyway. That is why my mother is looking for something else.

I remember a painful story about my mother, which I want to write down too. Our former milkman did not supply us any more, and that is why my mother bought from a hunchback man who was passing by the door with a little cart. Sometimes he gave a week's credit, and once there was no money for him: so many people had already come for money. My mother got a fright when she saw his little cart through the window. I was annoyed by her guilty look; it was a question of a few guilders. My mother did not dare invent some pretext and sent my little sister to say that she was not at home. We listened and expected, as usual with put-off creditors, protesting grumbles and the closing of the door, but instead the man began to shout, pushed the door open and yelled in the passage that he had to have his money and that he did not believe that my mother was not at home.

My little sister remained silent and naturally looked anxiously toward the living-room door. The man continued, while he stepped out into the street and let the neighbors enjoy it too. (We lived in a poor street, but at the "nice end.") I saw my mother turn pale and understood how intently the neighbors would listen. I was disgusted by this tradesman, who knew so well how to take revenge when one failed to pay, and I sprang up furiously, even seizing a bread knife, although it is a question whether I should have done more than slam the door. But my mother came and stood in front of me and prevented me from opening the door of the room. Meanwhile the fellow made a game of it and ran several times into the middle of the street. My mother still stood in front of the door. Her face was white and her eyes stared fixedly into the distance. Now he jumped into the passage and, amidst general hilarity, took the mat along, as we saw from the window. After that he spoke to a little group of women and pointed to our house. My mother stood at the window and said nothing. She only put her hand up to her forehead and rubbed it. Then she said: "I'll go there." Now it was my turn to prevent her, but she said: "Go away! They don't know that he is making all this fuss over three guilders." I heard

the cart drive away and saw my mother going toward the neighbors in front of the window. They were a baker's wife, a printer's wife, a policeman's wife and some others I did not know. My mother had not yet reached them when they turned towards each other with their backs to her. I saw it clearly through the window. My mother hesitated, but said something to their backs. They did not answer. Then she stood silent. Some of the women went up to a greengrocer's cart. Others went into their houses. My mother turned round. She came into the house, said nothing, sat down and wept. I do not believe that she will quickly forget that. The necessity to justify herself to the neighbors had made her forget the instinctive feelings of revenge which the "inferior" neighbors feel for the neighbors at the "nice end."

This afternoon the moving van is coming. My mother has found an apartment in Station Street. That is a narrow, winding street with two-floor apartment houses. We live on the second floor; room and suite, kitchen and two bedrooms. So now I have no longer even a little room 2 x 2 x 2. If I want seclusion, I can choose between the toilet and the coal shed. But there is one advantage, my mother will not have to whisper with the creditors any more. In that street every one has debts.

But in God's name what must I do? I am still writing quietly as if nothing were happening. Late today we shall be moving in, and then I can go and sit with the whole family. In my little room I could not get away from them, but now they will sit almost on top of me. I had better give up even the appearance of working and go on relief, arm in arm with my father. And why not? I am learning to be resigned.

The tone of my writing is getting false again. My mother has a tear-stained face and hasn't begun to pack, although the cases are standing ready and the moving van will be here in a few hours. I hear my father talking occasionally. If only they would act normally and, above all, not make a drama of it!

II. The Shadow of the Mill Sails

On Saturday, when the sun shone into the room smelling of tea, our cotton suits were ironed. My mother was busy with it for a long time, pressing her lips together and holding the iron in her hand convulsively. On Sunday, when the church bells had ceased ringing, we put them on; they were tight at the waist and the white shirts felt cool against our necks. The footsteps of the

walkers rang in the streets that lay arched in the quiet Sunday sun. We knew that we were being watched from the upstairs window as we walked away but we pretended not to notice it. The crease in our pants stood out sharply over our bare knees. Our shoes shone, but the holes in the soles felt cold on the paving stones.

Two rows of trees with young leaves stood bolt upright along the lane that led to the woods. First there was the park with the mounds and fountains laid out in a rough circle, with a board at the entrance as a warning: "No admission after sunset", and a monument of the Queen Mother with a face that had turned out too severe. We followed the road alongside the park and ducking under some gnarled trees that felt left out by the spring, we came to the path with the bumpy cobblestones and a bridlepath that led directly to the tennis courts. With as much indifference as our tight little suits would permit, we put our hands in our pockets and, unruffled and whistling, we approached the Bench, the quarters of the tennis caddies. They stood in a bunch, shouting, cutting sticks or sitting nonchalantly at one end of the Bench. As we went by, they became silent, watching our movements with suspicion. One of the biggest of them walked towards us menacingly, swaying his hips. But we kept our eyes glued to the pointed cobblestones hurting our feet and disappeared into the woods. There was a winding path with hawthorn in the distance and the twittering of birds and other sounds, buzzing and warm as if it were already summer.

We looked through the trees intently toward the beginning of the tennis caddies' path. Cor jumped up and pointed to the cyclists coming around the corner. With our heads bent forward we ran along the bridle-path like a flash, past the Bench. There was mostly dust to be seen at the quarters by the time we reached the cyclists, the players on the Red Court. We followed them running close to the bicycles. At the Bench the caddies were all standing in a heap ready to drag us away, but the leader in a turtle-neck sweater just shook his fists and sent three of the boys after the bicycles. They trotted along too, at the same time trying to tread on our heels. We got closer to the bicycles, moving our arms and legs rhythmically. At the path where the cyclists had to get off, the boys whined, but the tennis players decided to take the cotton suits. A stone hit Rik through the trellis-work, a beginning of what was awaiting us.

But the sun was already low on the horizon when the players on the Red Court stopped, and we sauntered along the road each

holding forty cents in our moist hands. Our knees were trembling and the crease had disappeared from our pants. Everybody had gone home, only one early couple was already walking into the woods, where the birds were chirruping their loudest just before the sun disappeared entirely. The little tent where the caddies spent their money was still open. Klaas and Leentje were waiting for the evening strollers. They revived when we came. When we were licking our ice-cream cones, Klaas asked, "Are you new?" and Leentje said, with two big wrinkles in her freckled face, "Tomorrow they will bring knives and waylay you." And, muffling her voice, she told us about the ways of the tennis caddies from Friendship Street; how they had followed her one evening and thrown her to the ground. Klaas listened disdainfully, raising his shoulders higher and higher till they left no room for his neck. He knew everything and therefore gave Leentje a sign to go away for a minute while he called us behind the curtains of the tent and told us what we had to do. When we ran home after that, I was already seeing Rik lying in the dust at the side of the bridlepath bleeding from the stomach. They ought not to punch anyone in the stomach. Not below the belt, we had been taught.

The windows were open when we came home and we smelt fresh fried potatoes and salad. In exchange we were able to give ninety cents. With the tea after supper we had cookies, and sitting on the closed veranda I heard every movement of the cane chair in which my father sat. From the garden came the sounds of cats nearing each other and miaowing. The wind played with some neglected rose garlands over our neighbor's gate. My mother stroked my hair, staring vacantly into the distance. Rik and Cor were in the street with Wout and Lange Jaap.

We felt it our duty to go to the tennis courts the following evening, but first we walked along the dike and the ditches, gazing at the weeping willows through which the white crosses of the churchyard gleamed. Rik listened attentively to the frogs that were croaking at the side of the ditch, but Cor gave him a push, and without further roundabout ways we came to the bumpy road and approached the Bench. We had white sweaters on, with the sleeves pushed up. There was a hubbub and hissing as we came near. Pebbles clattered on the cobblestones quite near us. One of the boys whose name was Tinus came toward us. He danced out in front of us, distorting his wrinkled face and cursing uninterruptedly without perceptibly opening his mouth. I looked at his feet that hardly touched the ground, like those of a

marionette held too high. Rik walked very straight, Cor swung his arms, and I felt my knees tremble. At the Bench they then performed a screeching Indian war dance and one, two and then three figures broke away and rushed toward us with heads bent, howling like factory sirens. We stood still, our bodies tense, when suddenly the signal of the leader sounded: "The bicycles!" The group drew up in order of march and swarmed round the cyclists from Court A, sending shrieks into the air. We remained behind and then ran along too, pushing and kicking as the others were doing to us. All found something to do on Courts A and B and the Red Court. Cor and Rik were busy too, and for a moment I looked bewildered at the caddies deftly unrolling the nets and putting the balls in their places. Cor and Rik waved to me, and the others cursed at me whenever they got a chance. I stood leaning against the trellis-work when I felt something wet from behind. I looked round and saw Tinus standing with his legs widespread. The water was coming in a wide arch, now watering the flowers. "Beat him up," I heard my brothers shout and slowly, my legs still trembling, I approached Tinus. He pressed himself against a tree and for a moment his face was still. I saw the warts on his hands and his thin legs through the holes in his pants. His throat contracted nervously. "Beat him up", I repeated to myself, but he was already giving me vicious punches. I felt them land on my shoulders and come lower to my stomach, and I turned red. My hands grabbed at his body, at his neck, but couldn't find them until I had raised my arms in front of my face; going toward him in this way I seized him and twined my left arm round his hot neck. He yelled but I pressed against him and pulled my other arm around his neck like a vice, bending his head down. His long legs trampled to and fro, kicking my ankles, but his neck glowed against my arms till I threw him to the ground with a jerk. It seemed unnatural, to find myself so empty, without his neck. But I had no time to think. He had already jumped up and, encouraged by the caddies who pressed their faces against the trellis, he hit me on the lip with a trembling paw. But he recoiled and bounced back when I approached. His arms were beating and churning as if a giant were after him. I felt myself breathing more deeply and my chest expanding. Then I seized him, this time easily, and while he yelled and his parchment face glowed as if I were lighting mysterious little lights, I bent his body almost coaxingly and pushed his head between my knees. I pressed his seat against the fence and beat him, the more vigorously the harder he tried to wriggle. When I stopped my hands

were smarting. Rik and Cor were dancing on the court, the others were hissing at Tinus who opened his mouth wide, showing decayed teeth, and yelled.

Pretending I did not care about my victory I sauntered away, my hands in my pockets. As I came near the Bench, Menten, the well-known Jewish dealer in old iron, stepped out of his car and said, "I need you." The day before, although I had not been working on his court, I had handed him a ball, and he had not forgotten me. His trousers had a sharp crease and covered a fat, squat body. His pale face with horn-rimmed spectacles was serious. His forelock through which cream-colored skin could be seen was stuck to his skull. I followed him as he opened the door to his court. I fetched the balls out of a dark shed smelling of showers and perfume. Menten did not move while I stretched the net. The copper-colored light of the sun twinkled on his spectacles while he indicated to me to stand on the other side and throw the balls to him. We went on till the light had gone. All the tennis courts were empty. The noise had died away. Menten looked at me seriously when he gave me my pay, and nodded. Cor and Rik were waiting for me at the exit, and we celebrated the victory over Tinus and the Bench with ice-cream.

The Christian schools had a day off, and Cor and Rik went fishing as soon as the sun was visible on the horizon. I got up later and first did some gymnastics. My body was smooth, with very fair little hairs and a three-cornered birth mark. My arms were thin, but yesterday I had tried them on Klaas when he inquired after Tinus, and he had not been able to throw me off.

I walked to the Bench where, to my disappointment, I found only one boy with fat white legs, short pants, a receding forehead, large watery blue eyes and a small mouth that stood open. I sat down next to him on the dewdrops that were still on the Bench. We both remained silent, and I drew little figures on the sandy path. In the distance I heard hammering at the dockyard, steam whistles on the river and sometimes the bicycle bell of someone still on the way to the office.

"Tinus would have beaten you up if you hadn't thrashed him," said the boy.

"But I did thrash him," I answered, suddenly restless and thinking over how I had done it.

"Why are you caddies?" (I said nothing.) "Tinus and Govert call you poor lice, and Hein knows from the grocer that you have debts everywhere." I stood up and bending over the hedge cut

off a stick with soft green bark which I cautiously peeled off, sniffing up the smell of the pale wet wood.

"Have you finished school?" asked the boy.

"No." Then, remembering in a flash how strong I was, "Say, do you want a beating. Poor lice!" But I had no desire to get up. He said, "I could stab you in the shoulders with my knife, and then your arms would hang limp." Slowly I swished the stick through the air, but the boy paid no attention.

"I wanted to stab my father with my knife," he resumed, "but he threw me down the stairs."

"Where do you live?"

"In Friendship Street; all tennis caddies live there."

"My father never hits us. He just grins and threatens with a stick."

"My father is a lunatic. He shouts so loudly that my mother wakes up. She is ill."

"What's your name?"

"Lambert."

In the distance some cyclists were approaching, fat De Hoed, his wife, son and daughter, of the Red Court. We got up and, without arranging anything, trotted along. We stretched the net and ran after the balls for hours while the sun stood above us setting Lambert's head afire.

When we were free we bought apples and wandered off to a grass field; it was one o'clock. I looked at Lambert who could only eat his apple in small pieces. "How did you get such a big head and small mouth?"

"I am like my mother. You should see her."

"How long has she been sick?"

"Twelve years; she is paralyzed and lies in the cupboard-bed in the dark so that sometimes I only see her forehead and eyes. It smells of old apples in the bed, when the sewer doesn't stink."

"What's your father?"

"He is a machine fitter but he has been on the dole for the last five years."

"Have you any brothers?"

"No, a sister who has been living with an aunt in Gelderland for a long time. She doesn't want to come home any more."

We ate the apples and Lambert asked, "Do you give the money you earn to your mother?"

"No," I lied.

"We all do, except Tinus who lives with an uncle who works at the gin distillery." Before we went home Lambert warned:

"They'll beat your brothers up tonight." I walked alone through our street musing on that egg-shaped head that would bend over a white forehead and large eyes in a cupboard-bed with old apples. Rotten apples, perhaps.

It rained the next day and the day after, and both evenings I was alone by the river where green lights winked. There wasn't a single couple in the Privé, the lovers' lanes behind the river. The rain from the branches dripped cool on my eyes as I lay stretched out on a seat with my raincoat over my legs.

But on Saturday evening, after a hot day, there was fighting at the Bench. Cor stood panting by a tree, and his victim crawled on his feet for the last time. Rik was still fighting, and I admired his body that advanced and recoiled while his arms and fists moved steadily, warding off, pushing forward, high and low; punching the bulldog boy's nose to right and left, a movement that made blood flow. Rik's forehead was grazed, blood ran from his lips, but then he shot forward and pummeled the bulldog, who closed his eyes and moved his mouth foolishly.

Rik stopped, and we stood side by side waiting to see if anything else would happen. We had seen no knives. Opposite us stood the group: Tinus leering over the heads of the others, Lambert a little offside. Janus, the chief, had let the others fight so far, but now he ran forward, hitching up his pants, waddling as he ran as if we were three ninepins desirous of being overthrown.

Something else did happen. Just in front of us a cat shot past, black, with a tail that stuck into the air like a quivering arrow. After her came a big dog, his head to the ground. For a moment everybody watched the chase; then, without signal, we ran after the animals. Tinus in front and Rik next to him, Lambert and I behind them, through the lanes, along the tennis courts, over the grass fields. We heard the cat spit before she disappeared into the woods. Breaking branches, bumping into each other, we followed in the dark until we lost both animals. Panting we stood facing each other, not knowing whether to thrash each other. But finally we walked, somewhat self-consciously with our hands in our pockets, back to the tennis caddies' path.

After the chase we were welcome on the Bench, where Janus explained the rules to us and where Lambert and I considered ourselves partners. Being official caddies meant that now we could no longer follow the bicycles as freely as before. Now we had to sit on the seat and wait for our turn. When Menten sent Tinus back and wanted me instead, there was fighting again, and Janus said

that we didn't belong there. But we had captured our places for good by the time Janus had left to work in a factory.

Everybody knew us. On hot afternoons we fetched ginger ale for the players, and the girl whose black hair fell over her pale face gave us a drink, even when I accidentally kicked her glass over. Rik was greeted smilingly by a worthy lady whose clothes rustled and who lived in a big house with chestnut trees. Menten, when helping a lady into a car, had turned round and smiled at me. We were asked who we were and what we generally did. We felt we were the center of interest and sometimes we talked about how we had come into power.

The son of the baker in our neighborhood formed a tennis club with some friends and they occasionally succeeded in hiring one of the courts. They did not use caddies and the sons of the notables joked about these poor devils. We stood near them and glowed with enthusiasm at giving information. "The one is a baker in our neighborhood," I remarked, and one of the tennis players said, "Say, that is the fellow who brought tartlets to the party on Saturday." They laughed about the fellows who dared to play tennis, and we joined in before we began our task. Not until I was on my way home did I try to find an explanation why I, a little slave, laughed with the masters at the baker and his companions. Did I hate them because they had bad rackets and their pants were too short and because they laughed too loud? After all, everyone could play tennis, everyone, we too and even the tramp who picked up cigar ends. Picking up balls, running after bicycles and fighting for power with Tinus and Janus was an adventure. If I wanted to I could have fought the notables and exterminated them, preferably together with the bakers who laughed too loudly. All the tennis courts should be for the tramps with cigar-ends in their pockets and for girls with fair hair and pink dresses with flared skirts.

Lambert and I were late the following evening. Near the Bench we watched the swallows against the turbid sky. It was so quiet that near the forester's house we heard a leaking tap dripping. All the courts were occupied by tennis players and caddies and we walked into the woods. Lambert's white knees sometimes gave way as if he were on the point of abandoning walking as useless. We skimmed past loving couples who seemed to be outgrowths of the trees along the lane.

"Would you like to play tennis?" I asked Lambert. He did not look at me when he answered. "No, I wish my father would die.

Yesterday he came home and tried to lift the blankets from my mother's bed. She was afraid of him; I listened."

Three birch trees stood on the grass field at the side of the lane. We dropped into the grass and looked at the sky. The swallows had disappeared. In the distance we heard rumbling.

"I have tried to stab him. I followed him to Noordmolen Street near the gin distilleries. I jumped into the cellar just by the grain shutes and I saw him go by. I ran after him as far as the gin shop and I waited there for hours. He recognized me when he swayed out of the door and I supported him and led him close by the water not knowing what to do. I had no knife, but near the pipes I had picked up a file, rusty but with sharp edges. A policeman walked by and I quickly stuck the file into my father's pocket. After that he leaned heavily on me, his hands on my neck. At home I left him lying in the hall and went upstairs, stepping over his body. My mother lay in bed with open eyes, but I know that then she is asleep, and I played with her hair. The next morning he kicked me out of bed and asked how he had come by the file."

Then big drops fell, but we lay motionless in the grass with our heads down. I closed my eyes, and tried to comfort Lambert. "Can't you flee with your mother? Can't you take her on your back instead of leaving her in the cupboard-bed with rotten apples? You are strong. Take one of those boats in the Maas, row to the other side. Go to Vlaardingen and hide her in one of the barges that smell of fish. Sail far away from Friendship Street. Stay alone with your mother somewhere in the sun where you can stroke her hair as long as you like without having to fear kicks from your father and to think of files to which dust from the gin distilleries is sticking."

Lambert turned round, his face wet from the rain that was now splashing on us. He came close to me and whispered, "You are a stinking fool, a stupid idiot. Go to hell and back to where you belong." Long after he had gone I still lay in the grass feeling the rain on my body.

That evening Rik and I walked in the woods. We watched the glowing cigar-ends that came flying, sometimes right across the path, until the figures of the smokers came out of the dark.

I told Rik that I didn't want to pick up balls any more and he said I was crazy. "Mother needs the money."

"Then I must do something else, there is so much one can do." Rik remained silent and in the dark I couldn't see his face. We

walked on, past the glowing cigar-ends, numerous as fireflies. I said, "In a little while Lambert won't be picking up balls any more either, he will stab his father to death." Rik laughed. "Nobody stabs his father to death."

"But Lambert is not a liar. He told me how he would do it. One night when his father is drunk and beats his mother and gets him out of bed. Then he will jump on him—and you know how strong he can be—and take a rusty file out of his father's pocket where he stuck it long ago. He knows exactly where a throat is most tender. He will first cover his mother and then he will take his father on his back and carry him to the canal. You know near the little bridge there is a boat with a hole in it. He'll stuff his father into that hole and let the boat sink half under water. Then he will go back to his mother and flee with her."

"And where to?"

"You can go anywhere. Everything is open to everyone. And in Friendship Street she is lying in a dark cupboard-bed with rotten apples. You will see, Lambert is capable of anything. He hasn't got a big head for nothing. He won't be seen in the streets any more. He will row to one of the big ships where everyone speaks English, French or Italian and where they throw oranges overboard, they have so many. And we'll never see Lambert again, unless perhaps we pass one of the islands where palms grow."

"Lambert will probably land in the rope factory," said Rik, "he's pale enough for it."

"And his mother?"

"She will keep lying and waiting for Lambert and Lambert's father."

"Do you think they will stay together and set the place on fire on New Year's Eve to begin another New Year?" Rik did not answer but when we came out of the woods he said, "I shouldn't read so many fairy tales. What you talk about never happens."

When I walked to the tennis courts, a few days later, Menten was just stepping out of his car and he asked why I didn't pick up balls any more. When I explained, he told me to come and see him the following evening. Why, I asked myself when I saw him walking slowly to the court, and in bed I imagined that he wanted to take me along to his house in the mountains in Switzerland or that he wanted to undertake a cruise to an island in the South Seas. Perhaps he had heard of Lambert and his file. It was also possible that he wanted to teach me to play tennis in the garden with the fountain and the tortoises behind his house.

Nobody could enter his house with the austere double windows, until he had banged the knocker that awakened a brassy sound which echoed all over the house and over the canal, so that a policeman, whose helmet I could see gleaming in the distance, stood still and looked round. A maid with a stiffly starched cap showed me into a room with dark paintings and red velvet, where it smelled of dust until Menten's perfume came wafting in. He took my hand and held it while he asked me to take a seat. Sitting opposite me and looking at the palms of his hands he said that the house would be pulled down stone by stone and that no painting would remain in its place and that the tortoises would be placed in Blazers Zoological Gardens to everybody's pleasure. He was starting for France the following month and so he would not come to the tennis courts any more. He had been pleased with the way I had always thrown the balls to him and therefore he would like to do something for me. The word "do" got all the emphasis of the carelessly spoken sentences and for the first time his eyes, behind the glistening spectacles, looked at me. What did I want to be, he asked me. What would I like to be? I didn't know. Everything, nothing, only not a tennis caddie.

"Then begin in an office," he said, "don't go in for old iron, that presses too hard, but keep yourself busy with buying and selling. My broker needs a junior clerk. Report to him on Wednesday morning."

He stood up and I stood up and he put a hand on my shoulder and nodded. With the other hand he rang the bell and a butler came to lead me to the hall whence I got a last glimpse of Menten's round and serious head. On the steps in front of the house I stood still. I felt empty. How much I wanted to ask him! Why had he wanted to throw balls with me and not with the notables? Did he mean by pulling down stone by stone that he would make a bonfire of his house? Lost in thought, I sauntered along the water. The conversation with Menten seemed simple enough. But the way he talked made me curious. It seemed as if behind his words a completely different, baffling meaning was hidden.

Over the Kippebridge, high up in the mill, cries had been heard in the afternoon. Lambert's mother had died unexpectedly and quietly that morning. Lambert had come home, had scarcely looked and only stretched out a hand as if he wanted to touch her. After that he had been seen running to the mill where his father was working for a few days. One of the neighbors ran after him and asked him what had happened, why he was running.

And he had answered, "My mother is stiff, she is dead." Perhaps he ran to stab his father to death at last, perhaps to seek consolation. But when Lambert hastily climbed the ladder high up the mill, his father, who had seen him stand by his bed one evening, took a certainty for an uncertainty. He kicked with his boot against his chest and then watched him fall. The boss and his men heard Lambert yelling and came running up. When they had attended to him and at last rushed upstairs, the father was still tugging at the bars of the window, perhaps in order to be able to jump into the water, perhaps merely to be doing something. In the cell at the police station, he stared straight in front of him as if the stains on the dirty walls would offer him the solution of how to make everything undone.

Lambert had broken ribs and there was something not in order with his brain. He didn't recognize me when I went to visit him. But the nurses said that he roared when he was brought in until his mouth could no longer pronounce the word "mother." Now he groaned softly with pain. There was not much left for him without the woman who had the same mouth as he, for whom he picked up balls and who lay in the cupboard-bed so that he could bend over her.

On Tuesday evening I walked on the Westvest by the mill that creaked and threw long shadows over the crooked houses that leaned over to the Orange market. I thought of the mother who had been buried that day at the expense of Friendship Street. Lambert would probably go to a rush-and-mat asylum and later to a Poorhouse where he would gradually turn yellow.

And my cotton suit lay ready ironed for me to present myself at the broker's office the next day. My life would have to be like the shadow of the mill sails that flashed by ever more quickly until one could no longer follow them with the eye. Everything could happen, everything would happen.

Translated by Jo MAYO

L. Vroman

THE BREATH OF MARS

EVEN AT THE BEGINNING OF MAY THE WAR ABROAD STILL ADDED TO the intimacy of Dutch home life, as a storm outside will heighten the coziness of the living-room and the warmth of friendship.

For myself, in Utrecht I had a girl, my studies and some kindly disposed people; in short, something to hold on to. The talk about an impending invasion only led to the utterance of heroic phrases and projects, after which we separated in good spirits and with faces expressing elegant cynicism, hardly imagining the bitterness—should the Dutch border spring a leak—with which they would be repeated subsequently.

One morning, when the sky had a milky texture and the sun shone brightly, I awoke, because all around me, from nearby and far away, doors seemed to shut with a bang, and I gradually recognized anti-aircraft gunfire. The violence of the explosions was greater than ever before, but when a little later it became calm and the starlings could again be heard chirping, only peace and the spring morning remained. . . .

But again and again and again the gunfire sounded. It was as if one woke up in pain that at first appeared to be casual but that returned to develop into a malignant disease. I still did not want to get up and admit thereby that something was out of the ordinary—and what else but the worst?—had happened. A little later, however, the advance radio news announced that which was no longer a surprise. The first sounds coming out of the loudspeaker in my living-room obliterated all other sounds in the house; everybody was listening. I had on my shirt and one sock, the other, which I held in my hand, I examined minutely while I listened; it was gray with red dots in groups of three, which were arranged in rows and were somewhat discolored at the sole. "Rejected with indignation, unprecedented violation," the radio announced officially but with great bitterness. I thought: How troublesome are socks and how silly are garters, while I felt confused and deep indignation and an irreparable and incalculable loss as I drew on my second sock.

I had two landladies well up in years, spinsters. They said that this was quite a situation and with anxiety shining in their eyes

and worried voices they set about their daily tasks and conversations. I ate my usual breakfast with new thoughts in my head, especially about the front, which I tried to picture as a field of fatal casualties—luckily so far away that the blood could not yet trickle into Utrecht. I thought also, but not quite convinced of my sincerity, of sweethearts who had been separated by death. On the wall of my living-room I had hung a large map of Europe and stuck little flags into it; in Finland, right across Poland, some in Luxemburg. I took one of them and stuck it at the border, in in the direction of Germany, as if it came rushing from that direction.

On the street everything was normal and quiet; soon a few more house doors stood ajar, suggesting neighborly calls. I went to my girl. There reigned an almost spasmodic everyday atmosphere, which made us laugh. My girl and her elder brother left for college, and I went on my way to the botanical laboratory where I worked at the time. Here there was a kind of feverish activity; apparatus was carried from the upper stories to the cellars, new acquisitions of which we were all proud, ancient models often treated with respectful amusement, fragments of framework which had still functioned the day before, like detached but still recognizable limbs of good friends. Our professor descended the stone steps, bent under a massive metal X-ray apparatus, which was more than a metre high. It was painful to see how the veins on his temples and neck were swollen and how his hands had become claws, he whose profession had never called for heavy physical labor. One of our assistants arrived in uniform and was surrounded by others. "This telescope belongs in the former undergraduates' room, these are the keys of the closets upstairs. Six airplanes have already been shot down in the neighborhood of Utrecht. I still don't know where they are sending me— Ann is . . . I wish you all the best of luck!" His voice and his gait had already become heavier, and his eyes seemed to have acquired the isolated enthusiasm of one who is about to make a speech. We all wished him courage, followed him with our eyes as though he were leaving for a long voyage, and I felt that the war had begun.

Books were brought downstairs from the library. The older ones were stacked in piles and on them the shelves of the empty bookcases, which in turn bore the newer volumes. It was hard work, but the physical fatigue served to explain away the inner anxiety. After that was over I erected my apparatus; I worked in the cellar, so that my work did not have to be moved away. Next

weekend would be the Whitsun holiday. I therefore stopped the experiment, opened the ventilator, so that the thermostat, in spite of the warm spring weather, could maintain a temperature of 20° C., extinguished the white light in the room and the red one in the hallway and again went into the daylight. I had taken along the results of my work—many columns of figures, which required simple but tedious calculations, in order to work them out during the following days. These days I would spend as a guest at the home of my girl and her family, which was situated about a quarter of an hour's walk from my rooms. It seemed that there had been no question of classes at the college. My girl and her brother had helped bring the alcoholic preparations of the medico-anatomical laboratory from the building into the inner court, where in case of bombardment the inflammable fluid would run out before it could catch fire. Because we all felt to have participated so actively in the war, the circumstances seemed much more real than in the morning, and we actually went to lunch in high spirits. From time to time airplanes approached. At first one felt a few indefinite impacts of far distant cannon fire, as if the wind was passing by windows, then a short silence, after which the high humming of motors could be heard. Then immediately followed the explosions of the cannons at Baarn and Soesterberg and, a moment later, the booming reports of the anti-aircraft batteries of Croeselaan. As soon as this started we ran to the balcony of the apartment house, hoping to see a few airplanes hit and falling, but we were always disappointed.

The planes were very high; their noise and appearance were irritatingly mosquito-like. Little black clouds became suddenly visible, disappeared from sight and often vaguely took on the shape of airplanes, which stood still as if in fear and then fell apart and made one think of stricken machines. However, they soon became completely transparent and no longer fell; the real airplanes had in the meantime disappeared undamaged. Then we again looked up to the high sky at other planes which acted likewise, and we went back inside where our suspense was accentuated by the unfinished, abandoned lunch.

I went to my rooms during the afternoon to fill a very small valise with necessities for the coming holiday; a blackout torch, pajamas, toilet articles and a change of underwear.

Back in the flat I found the family already busy with the blackout. We got out the black paper, kept inside since the last air-raid drill, fastened the upper corners above the windows, temporarily rolled up the loose hanging part and attached it. It hung

somewhat crooked and low and gave the room a crazy twilit appearance. We arranged the same funeral decoration at the home of Mevrouw Smit, a neighbor and block leader, whose house was occupied by the air-raid protection unit. In her house we struggled between the crowded furnishings with large sheets of paper, which we pasted together from long strips. Thus we immediately darkened the room. We turned on the light, fastened the paper and lifted it halfway up—again that faint malicious daylight, which penetrated. After we were through we ate, with our fingers still sticky from the paste and the effort. In the meantime it had become dark, so we let the paper down and pinned it over the half-open window. Every breeze stirred it, and it made disquieting creaky noises. Sometimes it bulged like a full sail, and we had to shut the windows.

Only the living-room had been blacked out, so that the home life was crowded into it. In the empty corner a divan was placed for those who had worked the hardest, which caused many expressions of altruism and offered diversion. The evening was spent in looking at pictures in magazines and doing in the Germans and listening to the confused news that interrupted the radio music. Finally we decided to go to bed, for we were tired. My bed seemed unfamiliar, it was a camp bed. I fell asleep empty of thought.

The anti-aircraft guns started early in the morning. The early sunlight caught the new houses on the other side of the street; the rooms were airy, and a gentle, cool wind moved the curtains. Peacefully cradled by the noises of housekeeping, I sat at the table to make an illustration for a child's story; it would appear next Wednesday in Rotterdam. At first the explosions of the anti-aircraft batteries interrupted the lines I was drawing, but finally I succeeded in moving my hand continuously during the loudest explosions. I was very proud of myself and secretly saw myself in the company of undaunted spirits who were inspired by their greatest thoughts during the turmoil of battle.

This day also and the following were spent in peaceful, trifling occupations. The windows were plastered with pieces of white paper, which divided the scene into triangular sections; we read, listened to the news about air-raid protection and followed the cited aircraft over tne map. They went in an unindicated direction like ants on the wall, with alarming uncomprehensibility.

Those among us who came home from running errands, always brought news and cast it in bold form, but it was so chaotic and

incoherent that all opinions, even the most sombre ones, vanished and left us finally indifferent.

The following morning, Monday, was somewhat more lively. Windows had to remain shut, and cars drove through the city, carrying men with bayonets which were directed at everything and everyone, like a bad conscience. Towards the afternoon the dusty troops approached. We saw them sit down against our walls; some lay down. A little later the civilians mixed among them. They seemed to be a different kind of animal, delicate and variegated, distributing victuals; then the soldiers mounted our stairs. They looked large and heavy, as if they could not turn their heads or spread their fingers. But they were quite whole, one could look at them without fear. They came from the Grebbe defense line. One of them sat down to change his socks, but fell asleep with his ruddy face turned up and his mouth wide open—we had to wake him when the troops left. There came still more, who were fed and disappeared. Later we heard that the Grebbe defenses had surrendered.

Firing sounded in the city, but there were no front-line noises, only separate reports of shots, which did not get closer. In the neighborhood there was a house that had aroused suspicion. Soldiers filled it, and it stared out stupidly from its shattered windows as if it had been arrested.

There was a hospital right across from us; Red Cross cars rushed out and re-entered slowly. It fascinated us like something forbidden; we were uncertain about the healthiness of our curiosity. We also felt the need of amusement in proportion to the approaching stench of corpses, and we looked for it. The Burgomaster made an encouraging speech over the radio; thinking that the microphone had already been disconnected, he finished with a sigh of relief; and the news broadcaster once started his report by slowly counting to five. All this made us laugh out loud, and we repeated it several times.

In the evening of this day, joy reached its apex. The daughter of the neighbors downstairs, Puck Sachs, who worked for the L.B.D. (Dutch Air Protection Service), was tireless and wanted gaiety. We all gathered in their living-room and after tea-time we played a game; sheets of paper were folded three times and the first player would draw a head, the second a rump and the third legs on the last folded section. Thus strange figures were created; a vague elephant with the sharp head of a stork, or Hitler with the perplexed body of a dog and frog's legs. When

we had laughed ourselves out, we took our leave, and one of the ladies began to cry, which hastened my departure.

The next day we prepared ourselves for eventual evacuation. Around a briefcase we would roll two blankets; over that we would tie an old raincoat with a rope that fastened onto a handle made from towels. Everyone received such a bundle, which measured about a metre. The work became more and more realistic: to my luggage I added Goethe's *Faust*. We dragged preserves, typewriters and a dictionary to the cellar, ate hastily as laborers and heard that in the afternoon we should really have to leave.

At half-past four we waited with our bundles and trunks on the sidewalk in the sun. From other streets were already streaming people loaded with blankets, sheets and household goods. All of them walked as slowly as if it were a funeral procession, and many of us uttered pitying remarks, forgetting that we shared their fate. Mevrouw Smit, with the proper spirit but weak in body, unsteadily carried a sign bearing our evacuation number. She was very restless, often looked at the sky and said that it was about time. At five o'clock a city bus approached to take us; it was moving to see how this goodly conveyance, breaking its former itinerary, cheerfully came to our aid.

We drove to the outskirts of the city, always passing évacués, through a bobbing sea of luggage. We were housed in the Evangelical Community house, in a stone room with wooden benches, shared our bread with strangers in another room, and had the appearance of a conducted tour, jovial in our common adventure. There was a small garden behind the building, surrounded by high walls, where we could relax. There we found our heads covered by slowly descending ashes and saw large pieces of burnt stuff, twirling high and quickly in the approaching twilight. From this unfamiliar building all Utrecht seemed foreign to us, and everything spoken seemed to be in a strange language.

Beds were made on the benches, the women were to sleep apart on the gallery. This caused a great deal of hilarity. Puck Sachs entered in the midst of the jokes and said that Holland had surrendered.

"Then we might as well have slept at home," I still thought, as I was running outside into the street; I saw how quickly the pavement moved from under me and that I was not alone; feet ran behind me. We reached others, who stood still, as did we in turn, to listen. We heard the loudspeaker admonishing us to behave in a dignified manner and forbidding resistance. This was enough; we ran back with the news. When there was no longer

any reason to run, I was gripped by a strange fear. I saw lights being turned on in the city, and a woman cried as she ran; disarmed soldiers hiding their inactivity behind a grin, and others inside, who moved mechanically, arranged their pillows and remained silent. Did they want to go to sleep at the approach of the black, bloody thunder of wheels? The East burst forth into light that I felt in the right half of my body, the might which surveys everything would find me faultless and tear me apart. Now already I knew how shamelessly my mortal fear was being exposed, I saw it in the eyes that observed me curiously, heard their pity humiliate me audibly.

This would remain. There would always be the shame of my fear, when it would appear groundless, for my submissiveness when I was caught. Bodily contact with the enemy already seemed to end in death for me, afterwards there would only be ridicule as he would fold my limp body into preposterous positions—at sports I had always appeared ridiculous—but this would make my loved ones lose all respect for me . . . this I must avoid. Away from the East . . . the railroad map of Holland was a straight line leading to the West, from Utrecht, over Gouda, where my parents lived, to Scheveningen, to the sea, to sailing boats and England.

Thus a resolution was formed which obliterated all fear. I was drinking tea as I told of my plan and felt it grow under the protests of those who listened to it. I asked for a taxi; it was fetched by the religious teacher of the community. When I said I still wanted to have a walk with my girl, he indicated how I could do this, while his eyes expressed fear.

We decided that I should go first to Gouda and only after at least a day of consideration to England. I agreed, because I already knew then that I would go and that nothing could stop me any more. I took my small bag and overcoat and then many hands grasped mine I counted the tearstained eyes and there were six. My girl took me to the taxi; before I drove away I saw her reliable back as she went into the house; I should not have looked.

I sat next to the silent, fat chauffeur. We drove through illuminated Utrecht and the empty suburb into the lonely polder. "This is going to be some trip, sir," he then remarked. In the light of the streetlamps the white ashes whirled down again; all around it was dark. A cold, fitful wind was blowing. It was half-past eight.

I was enjoying the westward movement and the uneventful

race with the enemy. The chauffeur used his brakes; a long column of military cars was on the road and the first ones stood at an angle. I heard someone call in the silence, a motor was started, and I saw the car turn slowly. My man got out, and the gravel crunched under his shoes; he moved into the headlight, talking, and returned. The military ordered us to extinguish our headlights. "But the war is over," we said; they had heard nothing about it. Where did we come from? The news had not come to Woerden yet, so we could only leave on the sidelamps. By the dim light we followed our way, the chauffeur protesting like an expert. In the distance to the left was a fire—Gouda?—but it stayed along the horizon. In the town I pointed out the way to a quiet avenue on which my parents lived.

Here I got out. It seemed like summer, so sweet and fragrant was the air, and the elm trees were in full leaf. Some army cars were parked in the black night; our house was dark too. I let myself in with a key by the light of my blue torch. Nobody was in the living-room, only the loneliness of familiar objects. I went upstairs—the way which formerly led to my bedroom—and knocked at the bedroom door, but I did not hear anything. The knock still reverberated in my brain, but I erased it with another one. Then something creaked, the voices of my father and mother called, "Yes?", "No!" and "Who is there?" It was I.

Mother had already laid out my passport. Haste made the telling of my plan easy, but I thought I could depart without money, because it sounded very unreal. No, I should take something along, something like two hundred guilders. Often repeated farewells, two often, often touched hands, one soft, the other hard. When I drove away I had forgotten my torch.

We were just outside the city when our lights failed. Two soldiers passed by, helped us and rode along. One of them took the steering wheel. "It's hell there," he said, indicating the conflagration with the back of his head. He had been there, been taken a prisoner, escaped, been caught, put into a bus, driven away with nine other prisoners, shot at, but not touched. We were now driving very fast along a new road, passing the regular obstructions made by cement sewer pipes, and we looked entranced at the orange-yellow blazing line along the horizon, which was enormous and far away like a natural phenomenon, an endless, shrieking death scene from which sometimes anguished flames shot up in different places; then we sighed as if we had been stabbed. Later on the spectacle became reduced, because separate houses nearby interrupted it, and as the houses

stood closer together they altogether obstructed our view.

The wide streets of The Hague seemed unconscious and forsaken, but with a shock I discovered the dark masses of people that covered all the sidewalks and mid-street shelters. They stood motionless, like nocturnal animals, waiting for the men who were to come back from the front.

We took the soldiers to their homes in the city and drove to Scheveningen. I was to visit a friend of my mother's, to ask for her advice about my escape. In front of the house I paid for the taxi, bade the driver goodbye, rang the doorbell and was immediately let in by the woman who lived there. Her voice showed no surprise, she spoke quietly and her tone was business-like, but her face was contorted by horror. Perhaps she had been waiting thus for hours, or was my unexpected appearance—did I look strange, bewildered?—an alarming revelation? She did not give me much of a chance, she said; but I could not weigh her words, I only thought: Those eyes, that voice, perhaps she is going to sing—I must get away.

And I left. The way to the harbor was straight; along it my legs moved. I respected them, because they seemed indefatigable under the strain and they bore me along like a vehicle, as I counted the streetlamps that I passed. The limits of the world were reached, the painful silence of the city subsided and became more natural and unfolded itself finally in the pure, placid sound of the wide sea.

I stood at the shore, with my small bag—containing one change of linen—in my hand. To the left, in front of me, I heard voices, and I walked in that direction. Even from close by the talkers looked like silhouettes. There was some cursing and the rest was incomprehensible. "Are you looking for a boat?" somebody said and asked me how much I wanted to pay. "Two hundred?" I queried, because that was all I had and my voice was too low to participate in the debate. The man laughed derisively. "Why, mister," he said noticeably proud of his bad news, "some have offered as much as ten thousand and could not get anything!" He continued talking to the others. Apparently they wanted to chip in to buy a sailing-boat from him for four thousand guilders, but suspicion was aroused and there was fear of treachery. Sometimes one would detach himself from the group in despair, or walk away whistling. At other times a loudly preferred remark made it sound as if the group had been tickled.

It gradually grew lighter, the sky became paler and the faces more gray. The man who offered the boat for sale had a long

face, a flat, formless cap and wide trousers; others had jackets on. One small fellow, bald and without eyebrows, had thrown a thin blanket around his shoulders.

Above the still motionless sea the faintly green sky shot out and threw an unreal light upon the quay and some boats in the open. A little further off stood a small car; its motor was suddenly started and it made off hastily. Somebody cursed, because it was his car that was being stolen. Many spoke with an accent: German Jews who were already familiar with the procedure of flight. A young fellow from Scheveningen took me aside and asked me in a friendly tone for twenty-five guilders in return for helping me. I gave him the money. But later on it was said that nothing would come of it; they thought it was too bad about us, my helper said, almost sadistically. It was almost half-past three; we had been expecting the German soldiers for a long time. How would they come—first a few, firing from armored cars, or in a large gray mass, which would approach like the shadow of a cloud? "They are there now!" someone shouted, but it was only the racket caused by the little stolen car, which hurried along the deserted quay. Finally an agreement was reached, suddenly at four o'clock. We all walked towards the barbed-wire obstruction, the entrance to which was near; a motionless sentry was posted there; we were not allowed to pass. Somebody tried to go underneath it and got caught like a fly in a spider's web. He looked at us from between his legs, as he had fallen forward, and asked us in a flat voice to help him. Somebody said that he would never be able to extricate himself from it, but that was not true. After some pulling back and forth, the wire soon let its victim go, and we climbed over it. We found more soldiers; a long army car without doors was started. "Pay first," somebody said. We all gave ten guilders, jumped into the car, piled together like a human dunghill, and drove away. I hung on with one hand, balancing myself with my knee against the dashboard and knew that I looked ridiculous. Thus we reached the other side of the harbor, where our boat was supposed to be. Nothing was there; we had to return and found the fishermen busy with an unrigged ship, which was to become ours. Sails were lowered and hoisted. At half-past four the now completely visible boat was ready. It was painted white, its name was *Emma,* and though it was not built for seafaring, it was sturdy and watertight. We were all proud of our possession, in whose fate we should share. We jumped aboard, examined the sails, the mast and one another's happiness. The man who sold us the boat had received the money,

he fingered a note for a thousand guilders, which he held for a long time against the light in an unprofessional manner. He would have preferred silver, he said. In the meantime, and as we were paying off his helpers, a gentleman with a briefcase made his way through the crowd on the quay. There was some shouting. He wanted to go along, but a small girl followed him and threw herself against the wall gate, all the while sobbing and mumbling to herself. Her mother, also talking, approached: Dad must go away on business; Dad would come back soon. When the gentleman asked whether she could come along, they at first refused. Women aboard, where there were no accommodations and much danger—that seemed in contradiction with our manliness. But they gave in because of the little girl, so we took them on.

The cables were cast off; the two Scheveningen fishermen would steer. For a moment the boat rocked, then it moved away from the quay. At the end of the pier stood two coast-guards, who shouted at us that the wind was in our favor and that we must follow a westward course. As if they had waited for this, our sailors began to offer objections, steered towards the quay again and sprang from the boat; we must fend for ourselves. One of us, whom I had taken for a fisherman because he wore a blue jersey, took the rudder. He had sailed before, he said, and we all eagerly accepted.

We were now really in the open sea, a world apart, which moved through empty space, with only the creaking of the wood as a sound in the midst of our forlornness. The jersey-clad fellow, with only Scheveningen as a background, beamed confidence and gave instructions. We must lie down in the forward part; if enemy planes circled above us, they would take us for cargo above deck, and I must lie prone in the bow, taking turns with others, on the lookout for mines. Stretched out along the cool boards, I heard the murmur of voices from behind me and the noise of the small waves lapping underneath me. The sun rose fiery red, barely covered by brown-yellow skeins of clouds. The ashes were still falling. In the early morning light the last vestiges of cold and discomfort disappeared. I looked for the separation between air and water, it was really summer already. The sea shimmered, sparkled, and was patched with light and shadow. The little things that bobbed up and down and disappeared were not mines, but waves; but how far away were they? The bow of the ship had an iron ring, which was eaten away and flaky; it looked appetizing; what was its name again . . . feuilleté? . . .

I was almost asleep, but the thoughts of mines awakened me. The sea was empty; I reported a small white stripe. One of us had a piece of bread. Half of it was for the man in the jersey, on account of his steering; who as we now learned had not slept for three days. He had been a sergeant at the Grebbe defense line; he was pale and friendly. The remainder of the piece of bread was cut into small squares, of which each of us received one. We played with our hunger and thought of ways to make it last longer, some chewed it but others thought that to suck it was better.

Three times we saw airplanes circling over us, and we hunched down like people saying their prayers. Towards afternoon, when the heat became suffocating, we heard the thunder of the cannonading from Zeeland. Above the coast we saw pointed columns, too high for towers; they must be columns of smoke. A motionless yellow steamer lay on its side in the misty distance.

We had a small hold in the forward part of the boat, in which stood a bucket attached to a rope; this served as a toilet. It was shallow and whoever stood in it showed his head, looking straight ahead with an intense expression. But it served its purpose. In the same hold somebody found a ship's compass.

We became thirsty and started to argue whether we should go first to Belgium or straight to England. At half-past two someone saw a freighter moving along the coast. The man with the jersey steered towards the ship, which now came in our direction and aggressively showed its red, white and blue bow.

Soon it was alongside, rather large, with one man on deck, who shouted that he was sailing for England and asked whether we wanted to come along. One of its sailors grabbed our mast, we lowered the sail in a heap and climbed aboard. The sail-boat looked skimpy as we left it behind in the sun.

This new world had four inhabitants, two skippers, a cabin boy and a passenger, a major. We were given coffee and remained on deck until it got dark and cold outside. Then most of us went down to the cabin; I, however, remained in the steering cabin. The night pressed against its windows and a biting wind blew up. The boat with its empty holds bobbed up and down, then straightened out drowsily, and the people in the cabin made horrible retching noises. Subsequently a foul air came up, it got thicker and penetrated my mouth like a greasy, decomposing substance. We in the steering cabin did not get sick, but were beside ourselves from this stench. At times some one struggles through the small door to the outside; as I was dozing off, I

would be awakened by the cool draught and I would see somebody standing faintly outlined against the darkness, his hair blowing with the direction of the wind as he leaned over.

Far below I saw the foamy crests of the waves; then I felt as if suspended in mid-air, and suddenly the sea would tower above us. I could not understand the few words the sailors spoke, they did not seem to make sense. After many hours, however, one of them explained to me that we were circling a buoy; thus we waited until daybreak. We had now passed the mine fields.

It was three o'clock. I looked out into the distance for a long time, following the light lines in the dark, then I looked at my watch again. It was one minute after three.

I must have slept. It was daylight when I was awakened by happy voices. Some people were already on deck, waving and pointing out the coast of England to each other.

Two mighty, silent shadows slid by close to us; English destroyers, which behaved as if they did not notice us, but which watched us out of the corner of their eye.

Harwich looked near, as a small boat signaled to us: "Drop your anchor."

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

M. Vasalis

THUNDERSTORM

THE MEETING OF TWO ECCENTRICS IS ALWAYS LESS EXCITING THAN one is led to expect. The guests had watched tensely to see how the meeting would go off between old Redhurst and Pole, who to a certain degree could have become the former's rival, since he possessed a legendary amount of knowledge and lived as strangely and as much in retirement as Redhurst. But nothing happened.

The two men shook hands, Pole looking away in the meantime, trying to find a chair. Redhurst contemplated him for the first and last time, conceived a vague dislike for him and forgot him. Mrs. Northcraft, who competently and with great cheer managed the small hotel, poured tea, standing at the table covered with a white cloth. She was a sturdy, very blonde woman, of

great joy in living and a motherly nature, which extended to all sickly or suppressed people. With it, however, she had a strong sense of humor and little taste for dramatics. Into her concern for her guests she never mixed a condescending pity, and she herself did not feel called upon to comfort the unfortunate. She was tender and wise and full of laughter. Here perhaps lay the reason for the success the hotel had enjoyed from its very first year.

The hotel was situated on an extensive sheep ranch, a wild, apparently abandoned high plateau. Surrounding it were a few other houses and a charming small grove of trees, ponds and meadows. It was here by preference that the guests liked to center their activities, playing tennis, chatting and carrying on social life as they had brought it from the city.

Outside of this small oasis, the veldt stretched out so far under the vast sky that at first one saw nothing but the horizon and the great changing play of light, and only afterwards, very small, the huts of the Kaffirs, and the Kaffir boys riding their ponies behind the white swarming herds of sheep.

Besides healthy tourists on vacation, ill people and convalescents often came to the small hotel and sometimes stayed for years.

Mrs. Northcraft knew all their life stories, and in her attitude when she stood as now on the lawn at her tea table, there was something of a mother as well as of a general. Her husband stood next to her and passed out the cups. It was a quiet and rather warm afternoon. The guests sat on the grass under a large cedar, in whose upper branches there always seemed to be a rustling. Some desultory conversation was going on. Mr. Northcraft did not listen to anyone; he cast an ironic glance at one after the other in turn, but a somewhat longer glance at Pole, whose shyness and exactitude irritated him every year anew. Mr. Northcraft stood with his feet wide apart, as he slightly teetered back and forth. His untidy trousers had a surprisingly low crotch, he held his pipe in his brown, wooden-looking hand. It always produced a slight gurgle, which he could never get rid of. His light, old man's eyes were sharp and open, and he often laughed inwardly. He felt again, as he stood next to his wife waiting for his cup of tea, the same irritated urge to shock Pole, to upset his room, where everything was in its appointed place.

"He is no man," he mumbled to himself. A new thought occurred to him, he took in Pole from top to toe and again laughed softly to himself.

Pole in the meantime was suffering unutterably. He sat in an uncomfortable chair and dared not get up again. He was used to having his tea served in his room, but Mrs. Northcraft had resolved to make him more human and had induced him under a pretext to come to the lawn among the other guests. He could not sneak away and he had not taken a book along, the greatest disaster that could occur to him.

He sat besides Mrs. Copper, a very articulate and fat little woman who, cramped by her own bodily form, sat back in a chair partly buried by herself and kept up a steady chattering, gurgling like a shallow small brook. She was here with her son, who suffered from asthma and who now sat alone a little further away, looking at the sky and in a continuous struggle with his breathing.

Leaning back in his chair with his legs on another sat Redhurst. His trouser legs were drawn up high and his naked, hairy calves were exposed to everyone's view. Every once in a while he would glance at himself with satisfaction. He was having a devilish lot of fun, because he had just attacked the Reverend James about *The Miracle* and everybody was listening.

He could stand a crowd like this only when it comprised an audience. Usually he avoided all company and sat reading, either on the front stoop or in his room. But sometimes, in a sudden urge to test his strength, he would go among the guests, who were all a bit scared of him, and hold forth in a monologue, which was meant to shock as many of those present as possible. Patriotism, mother love and religion, and sometimes as an added dish, morals, were his favorite subjects. Then he would retire again, licking his chops like a satiated lion.

Even Mr. Northcraft had some respect for Redhurst, who had led a life filled with adventure. He came of a good old family, had inherited a great deal of money, gambled it away, earned and lost it, and had a humble passion for the arts and sciences. One would say that in every respect he was different from Pole; nevertheless they had a lot in common.

They were both in bad health and did not want to admit it. Redhurst was a sickly, fat, loosely jointed old man, with powerful bone structure. His face was large and yellowish, and he had deep pockets under his darting, cold, grey eyes. His lips were blue-tinted, his teeth were regular and yellow. As he stood there, his hairy hands were thick and slate-colored, as if they belonged to a body that had floated for a long time in the water. He walked heavily, with an impaired swagger, and he breathed hard after he had taken a few steps. He never wore socks and his naked

feet were stuck into old-fashioned high boots, without laces or buttons, which made them appear blind and inexorable. He dressed like a French peasant and still gave an impression of smartness.

Pole, on the other hand, was almost a clothed, disembodied spirit, who only seemed visible by what he wore. His clothes were always spotless and trim and, though they had been made by a good tailor, they flapped around him as he walked. He spoke with a hollow, strangled voice, as if he were deaf, and walked lightly and quickly, all the while gesticulating with his arms as if they were tentacles. His breath simmered and whistled continually in his hollow chest, and he was ashamed of it.

Both men liked to be blasphemous, Redhurst taunting and laughing loudly; fundamentally he did not much care whether God existed or not, but he drew pleasure from the painful silences and from the protestations that followed his blaspheming. Pole reacted fiercely and vengefully; the problem was not at all a matter of indifference to him.

Both were passionate readers, but strangely enough Redhurst had an aversion to all novels, except old French ones. He preferred to read sociological, ethnological and philosophical books and knew a great deal about astronomy and physics. He felt the urge to know everything, preferably backed up by figures. He had never been a student, but he was educated as only a non-student can be.

Pole was an amateur archaeologist and a teacher of English. He read during meals, in bed and all day long, and when he was not reading he looked for fossils and prehistoric tools. He felt no desire to taste his food, to carry on a conversation, to be aware of his bed, or to know his fellow humans, except those who had been dead for thousands of years. When he was walking by himself in the hot sun, bending down or erect, looking around and talking softly and touching the stone in his hand, he would live again the fantasy of his childhood: all people on earth were dead but his mother and he. They wandered together over a deserted world; she found all kinds of remains; they were able to use everything. He stopped to play everywhere, and she waited until he got tired and then she would carry him home. Thus he was walking around now and his little old black car waited; his little car, which he loved very much, for which he cared as it cared for him, when dead tired and, his head buzzing with ideas, he drove home.

Neither Redhurst nor Pole had any friends; they were en-

grossed in themselves and would allow no one to intrude. Redhurst did not want it otherwise. He enjoyed many things. He lived royally and abundantly and was afraid of dying. Pole on the contrary was afraid of sundry small difficulties; he lived a careful and worried life and believed that he would not die before many unpleasant things had happened to him. He was familiar with the image of death and thought about it as an important, good event.

Mary, Mrs. Northcraft's daughter, was a nurse and had come home a few days before on a vacation. She noticed Pole's suffering expression, went into the house and came back with a book.

"I've finished it," she said, "but I found it most difficult. Could you explain it to me again? . . . This passage, where he speaks of all those races . . ."

Pole almost cried with relief and gratitude. He got up, excused himself to Mrs. Copper and walked with Mary out of the sun and into the darkened house. Mrs. Northcraft went into the kitchen and found, to her despair, Miriam the cook sleeping in a ring of grease, her brown countenance turned into a stone image and the stove cold and black.

Miriam awoke with a start, so self-conscious that she immediately went to the attack and asked to be dismissed in a shrill voice. Her face was smooth and youthful, her hair was in stiff, short curls; her long skull was nicely shaped, her eyes were golden and somewhat protuberant, so that light sometimes shone through them from the side.

Mrs. Northcraft paid no attention to her and called through the back door to another Kaffir servant, who sat on his haunches, splitting kindling while he sang psalms slowly and with propriety.

"Light the fire, old Jan," said Mrs. Northcraft. Proudly, sticking out his chest, he passed Miriam on his way in. As soon as he had done his task, he left the kitchen, in which he had never been allowed before and, once outside, burst into soft, happy laughter.

Mrs. Northcraft continued to work with Miriam, who felt insulted because she had an unshakable conception of hierarchy: old Jan belonged outside and her job was to make the fire! The servants ate beforehand, a staff of six men, all differing in race and color.

Miriam had to take them their food every day. She did it under protest, because she thought it below her dignity to serve "black folk," because she was a Basuta woman, of a pure and unmixed

race. The other servants had, besides their Kaffir forefathers, Hottentots, Bushmen, Indians and whites in their family tree, and she considered them inferior.

As soon as Miriam had left the kitchen, she called out in a commanding and threatening tone to old Jan, "Come here, you old baboon, grab this food, I am tired of fetching your food, do you hear? Hurry up, boy!"

Old Jan, unwillingly took the tray and carried it to the servants, all of whom lay on their backs in the shade, softly humming in many tones. They received him with laughing derision and called him Miriam.

"Miriam, what did you do with your fat, how did you get those legs? Come over here!"

Miriam, who had remained to peep around the corner, went back to her kitchen shaking with laughter, her self-respect completely rehabilitated. She sounded the second gong for dinner as if it were a war drum. Outside it had grown almost cold. In the dining-room the fire had been lit. Two old dogs baked their sore spots before it; little old Grandma Northcraft sat quietly and hunch-backed in a corner and nodded and smiled whenever anybody looked at her. She had already eaten; she ate before the others, because she spilled her food badly.

With a solemn, slightly hesitating voice the Reverend James said grace before the meal. The prayer took quite a time. The clergyman had been continually contradicted that day by Redhurst and now pronounced a somewhat irritated, long and stiff prayer, while all those seated around the table looked into their plates. One of the dogs audibly and slowly licked his belly under a mangy, lifted paw, and little Grandma laughed gaily like a child.

A servant then brought in the dishes. He was a tiny Bushman with a wrinkled, small, embryonic face; who moved with a swinging of hips in a coquettish manner. Other servants said that he was neither a man nor a woman; he lived by himself in a clean hut and had adopted a Kaffir baby. He took it along wherever he went and put it down in the shade, where it crawled about on its naked, velvety limbs and played contentedly.

Pole had leaned his book against a glass of water. Redhurst ate greedily and in silence, so that the conversation was led by Doctor Coleman, who had waited for this opportunity and kept it going in an authoritative manner. He had a dictator's exterior. He was a good surgeon, but in his daily occupations he retained the commanding look and clipped tone which he should have re-

served for the operating-room. He was devoid of any interest in culture and self-criticism, which heightened his assuredness. Still it was considered a privilege to have such a capable man at hand. "A real doctor," opined Mrs. Copper.

Mary, who knew many doctors and saw through his pose, nevertheless became restless under his steady glare; she laughed too much and blushed too often. He was good to look at—and she need never be afraid that he would understand and criticize her with any subtlety.

Cutting through all conversations, not interested in any audience, sixty-year old Mr. Northcraft held forth untiringly, never waiting to clear his throat. He talked about his old hunting adventures and of how he, with his brothers, had frightened the servants, as they were smoking opium, by previously filling their pipes with dynamite. He laughed over his own stories, his laughter often ending in a coughing spell.

At the end of the table sat the two eight-year-old Pette twins, a slip-up of the old Pette couple, who in their forty-fourth year, after a childless marriage of twenty years, were suddenly surprised by this event. They were delicate, fair-complexioned girls, fleet as water, always secretly excited; they lisped and giggled simultaneously and looked into each other's face, as if into a mirror.

Pole in spite of his book, observed how the doctor and Mary had developed common interest. He held himself aloof, but his eyes at times carefully looked up from his book, as if he were slowly stirring poison. He was very much upset. During his previous stay at the quiet hotel he had become friendly with Mary; that is, he was no longer afraid of her and he could look at her without having an unpleasant feeling.

He thought her beautiful and he had even allowed her to come along in his car, which so far as he was concerned was something like being extravagantly accommodating. He had so much familiarized himself with her and conducted so many conversations with her during her absence, that the meeting again that morning had been very disturbing. And now he interpreted her smile and amused interest in the doctor as flagrant infidelity. She remained friendly, respectful toward him and at the same time deeply concerned, as a nurse for her patient. She had the same warmth of heart as her mother. He tolerated this attitude, because he did not know how to alter it and he could make use of it.

"I should like to go for a ride presently," said Mary to the doctor. After the meal they walked silently to the stables, where

the saddle horses were feeding in the semi-darkness. The horses looked up uneasily and snorted as Mary entered; the white of their eyes shone in the darkness.

She patted their warm, strong necks and put the saddles on. They backed up and still unwillingly shook their heads protestingly at the unusual hour. In the open arena beside the stable the work horses walked around freely, they came now running with their long, uncut manes and looked at the shiny, well-groomed saddle horses, snorted and disappeared again in a free gallop.

The sun was setting, half of the endless plain was dark under the yellow, glowing sky; in the other direction heaven and veldt were hazy and blue. Then the sun suddenly dissolved, its light suffused the sky, which became yellow as honey and translucent.

They rode over a red sandy road, then across the veldt. The horses were fresh and happy; the twilight did not last long and soon the sandy places between the low, dark, wooded groves looked like water, through which they galloped dangerously.

The evening star rose, alone in an empty sky. The breeze was clean and gentle and blew against the cheeks of Mary and the doctor. They stopped now and then to look around. Mary looked like an Indian with her black eyes and high cheekbones. She belonged so much to this cool emptiness, high on her horse, that Coleman felt something like respect rising in him and he almost gave up his plans of seduction. He was, to tell the truth, not a very good rider and not accustomed to the sudden wheeling round of the horses in the increasing darkness in order to avoid pits and bushes. His greatest fear was that he would fall and make himself ridiculous.

Mary noticed that he was quiet, but she misunderstood the reason. The thought that he enjoyed the ride and the loveliness of the evening tempered her own delight until she became as still and serious as he.

So they returned, riding at a foot pace, to let the horses cool off, the only sound the clumping of the hooves and the soft creaking of the saddles.

In the hotel they found Pole who, with a face contorted by disgust, was trying to chase the moths out of his room. He had already put on his housecoat, looked pale and self-absorbed and was apparently occupied with endless preparations for going to bed.

"I'll just take you to your room," said the doctor firmly and without embarrassment to Mary. "It occurs to me, that I have

never seen it." His dictator's countenance remained undisturbed. He left her no time to think things over; now that he was off his horse his confidence in himself rose with every worthy surgeon's step he took.

Pole now stood before the open window, staying a while contrary to his custom, after he had carefully folded his clothes and had draped the mosquito net around his bed. Through the finely woven screen he saw the large stars caught in the mazes of a spider's web, shimmering and glittering like drops of water. The night was filled with awesome silence. He rubbed the palm of his hand along his narrow chest and stroked his lean hips. He could not get rid of the memory of the day: the doctor's dashing appearance, Mary's glowing eyes.

> "Tired of all these, from these would I be gone,
> Save that to die I leave my love alone . . ."

Tired . . . and disgusted, yes. But he did not leave any love behind. He had never considered suicide, not even in his periods of greatest depression. And about a woman, a loved one, whom he would have at his side all his life, he had no longer thought after his illness, until today when he had read Coleman's intentions so plainly in the other's too clear eyes.

The hotel was quiet now. The little Bushman with his small son lay wrapped in a blanket before the annex, the boy still clutching an orange; his small mouth was open and the moon shone on his two wide little teeth.

The horses sometimes stamped the hard ground of the veldt, and a shivering, damp snort came now and again out of the neighboring stable.

Mary was restless; she could not get to sleep and whispered now and then "no" and savagely shook her dark head. On her dressing-table, multiplied through the double mirrors to a triple unity, stood the portrait of a friend smiling stiffly in the direction of the disorderly bed.

Pole lay open-eyed on his bed and lectured: "The interest which of late has been manifested in Donne, is for the greater part due to his eroticism, though many of you do not realize this. It is not a coincidence that at a period when Lawrence is worshipped . . ." He cleared his throat, took a lozenge and closed his eyes. Everyone was asleep now, the sufferer from asthma sitting up straight-backed against his pillow, the couple Pette who

had gone to sleep quarreling, the couple Northcraft, hand in hand and still smiling because of one of his stories; the eight-year-old twins, freckles on their delicate little noses, more alike than two white mice, straight on their backs and breathing quietly; and Redhurst, a glass of whisky next to his bed as well as a book about the economic development of Japan.

Next day was an unhappy one for Pole. He wanted to look for stones with Mary, but she was already on her way with Coleman, a rifle over his shoulder, to hunt wild duck at one of the artificial lakes near the oasis. Pole went out by himself and did not find anything worthwhile. Coming back he saw Redhurst spread out like a lonely plateau on the lawn; he was drinking and reading and intermittently teasing Mrs. Northcraft by telling her that it still was not established that women had a soul.

"I really don't care, you know," he said, winking his large parrot-like eyelid, "provided they have a body."

"Hear, hear," said Mr. Northcraft, lifting his hand to slap his wife's generous thighs, but he scratched the back of his head instead.

Pole was jealous of Redhurst. He envied his isolation, so easily obtained by strength and self-confidence. He himself had to acquire solitude and rest by withdrawing himself and making himself small. Redhurst made a large space for himself by obliterating everything in close proximity and then enthroning himself proudly in the empty space.

Pole also took up a book, but after a few moments the print became blurred.

That evening, after the children had been put to bed and none of them knew what to do with themselves, they decided to play a game, the game called "Murderer" A jury had to be chosen from the company. Mrs. Northcraft, with her white healthy face, sparkling eyes and strong chin, would make up the jury with Mr. Pette. Mr. Pette had "had a couple" before and after the meal, and while he usually spoke in a soft and muffled voice, as if he were lying in a closet bed, he was now his old-fashioned, courteous self and almost boisterous. Mary looked around and missed Pole; she went to fetch him from his room, where he lay on his bed inside the muslin screen knees pulled up and sharply outstretched arms like a giant mosquito. Mary put an arm under his body, lifted him with ease from the bed and took him, blinking at the light, to the other guests.

Mr. Northcraft had taken Redhurst out of his isolation by

other means. "I know a joke," said Northcraft. "Come along, the women mustn't hear it."

"Is everybody really acquainted with the 'Murderer' game?" asked Mary. "The jury, mother and Mr. Pette, will allow us all to take a card from the deck. We agree that the one who has the ace of spades is the murderer. Nobody must let on what kind of card he has. Afterwards everybody hides in the house. All lights must be put out, you may enter all rooms except the children's room, of course. And after five minutes the murderer, who is hiding, must steal about and attack somebody. The victim must cry out, the murderer escape, all lights will be put on and then everybody must prove his alibi to the jury. You must tell the truth, only the murderer may lie. Let's start; you'll understand as you go along."

Mrs. Northcraft and Mr. Pette then allowed the guests to draw a card; they all disappeared, laughing and anxiously whispering in the dark halls and rooms, looking for hiding places.

Pole had drawn the ace of spades; he was the murderer. He had never played this strange game, he had never played any game. He walked around nervously, thoroughly confused, and was about to put on all the lights, to give up and go quietly to his room.

But then he saw, in the faint shimmering of light that penetrated through the crack of a door, that, very near him, the doctor was pulling Mary along and that she looked around.

Noiselessly, with beating heart he ran along the dark hall, into an open door. He heard a faint shriek; Mrs. Copper, squatting behind an easy chair, shouted at every noise she heard: "Oh! the murderer!"

Pole ran disdainfully out of the door, he was now really looking for his victim. He thought he heard the hated voice close by, vaguely he distinguished a broad back disappearing behind a door. He jumped and grasped a large soft neck, in which his skinny fingers sank almost completely. Horror seized him, but his fingers seemed to have acquired a life of their own. All his anguish, his love, his humiliation and his hatred streamed with cold rapture into his fingers, he pulled and pinched, and a sort of daze, akin to love, mastered him.

The cry of the victim was so natural that the guests, who had run toward the sound, admired and praised him.

"Lights" was the call. Solemn and swinging hips, the jury entered, Mr. Pette arm in arm with Mrs. Northcraft. They had both put on beards to appear imposing and were full of laughter.

From all the rooms the guests now gathered, to prove their alibis. There was general laughter, which, however, stopped suddenly.

For on the murder spot stood Pole, looking palely at Redhurst; Redhurst groaning, lying half in and half out of the room. His face was blue, his eyes were closed and blood came from his open mouth.

The doctor knelt at his side, felt his pulse and lifted an eyelid. But Redhurst had already sat up straight and had to vomit. There was one big broken yellow tooth.

"The shock," said the doctor to the bystanders. "He has a weak heart, he has been frightened and he fell down, isn't that so, eh, Mr. Redhurst?"

"Go to blazes!" said Redhurst. "And help me get up."

On the threshold the twins appeared in long pajama legs, their shining heads glistening in the lamplight. Intermittently they exchanged glances and then looked at Redhurst and his yellow tooth.

Mary had eyes only for Pole; she took his hand in an unobtrusive manner and led him to his room. He was as in a dream, but he still acted in a pitifully dignified manner. Mary felt curiously guilty.

"It will be all right with Mr. Redhurst," she said.

"Yes," said Pole speaking in a muffled tone. "But I wanted to murder him." He smoothed his hair and talked through the window, through the sparkling screen, "I thought at first that it was the doctor . . . but then I thought: It is Redhurst, and I could no longer stop. But he was afraid . . . he thought he was dying. I never do anything like that, I don't touch anybody. Sometimes in thought . . . I am fighting, I . . ." He sat down; it became oppressively still in the room, on the ceiling a large black beetle walked slowly, like a funeral coach. The faucet of the washbowl dripped persistently, everything seemed in suspense and to last for a century.

Mary fled to her mother, who, like herself, understood what had happened better than did the doctor and the other guests.

Redhurst lay on his bed. He was no longer angry, but still frightened and in pain. He did not think of Pole. The attacker had made no impression whatever upon him; he thought only of the occurrence itself.

He, Redhurst, had been attacked, he had been choked. His self-confidence was shaken, he had been left by himself, he had not put up any resistance. He was afraid and terribly lonely; he was aware that he was an old man and that he must die some

day, that some day that would happen irrevocably. He was moist with sweat, there were smarting tears in his eyes. "Mother," he called.

Next day Pole was up before daybreak. He carefully packed his trunks, put on his traveling suit and after a half-distracted, half-ignored breakfast he took leave of Mrs. Northcraft, who warmly held his hand in both of hers and shook it. For a moment he looked at her with his wary, disillusioned eyes. She smiled and threw back her head with the carefree, ironic gesture of a French woman when she says, "Fiche-t'en!"

"So long," she said, "hurry back, Mary and I like to have you here."

His car was ready. He gave the servant a small tip, he tested all the straps to see that the trunks were well secured, he checked his gasoline supply, the oil, the water, even the knotted white handkerchief on his head, put on his goggles and stepped inside. He pulled his legs in like long weeds; when he was ready and seated, Mr. Northcraft, who was looking on from a distance, spat on the ground. "An old young lady," he remarked. Pole's car disappeared at great speed between the trees and, when it was again in sight on the bare road, it was going with the inflexible purpose of an industrious insect.

The sun was already beating down fiercely and there was no wind. The red soil was soaked by the narrow, larger beds of little dried-up streams along which moved vividly green, tall herbs.

Pole looked around and as he did so, there was of a sudden a faint rustling coming from all sides, which increased and became stronger and louder. Everywhere around him on the veldt eddies of sand stood up high and straight in the air, to the right and to the left. The wind was as yet not strong.

He halted and put up the top; as he heaved at it quickly, two slate-colored thunder-clouds showed on the horizon. Looking around he had still in view the small oasis, in which the hotel was situated, in quiet sunshine, a perspective as beautiful and unreal as if it were a vision—a past, to which he would never return.

He got into the car again. Far in front of him blue rays from the sky stood out like hair combed straight up from the ground. Enormous shadows flew over the far distant mountains, some were as yellow as sulphur, others deep blue and black. A herd of sheep spread like flakes of foam in a long wave over the plain through the wild shadows and remained standing in a large

island of light. Slowly and broadly the rain edged up closer, hiding the mountains. The rustling increased. The air became, even in the sunlight in which he still drove, cool and open, like a theater when the curtain is raised.

Then a terrible thunder-clap resounded through the violet sky, after which the rain increased its patter. Pole continued driving. He was alone in the universe; the beauty and the violence, the great breaking-loose of the elements, made him feel beside himself with ecstasy. He shouted at the thunder in a loud voice.

The parched veldt began to glisten near and far; he drove straight through the level pools that were in his way; from all sides rivulets began to stream. He was wet and cold, and he had not been so happy since he had left Europe. Rain and thunder and the streaming of the water against his car window. . . . The road became impassable; he drove beside it, on its bank, but finally he stopped and deliberated whether he had not better turn back.

Redhurst got up somewhat later. He was still in a somber mood and decided to stay for a few days in a neighboring city, where he had acquaintances who lived in comfort and security. He wanted to read, to go to the theater and to have his tooth repaired.

He did not say goodbye, and his room remained untouched. He packed his small trunk and sat heavily back in the car. He did not pay any attention to the road, for the chauffeur knew it by heart. He remained dreaming for quite some time, but suddenly sat up with a start upon observing the pouring rain. They drove more slowly and then stopped. In vain the chauffeur tried to start the car, it would not turn over. Redhurst cursed and looked around.

He found himself, to his horror, in a décor of Judgement Day. There was still one spot of the somberly violent sky penetrated by a bundle of apocalyptic light, which flamed like a pool of fire on the plain. Thunder and lightning raged directly above his head and, in the somnambulistic state in which he found himself the circumstance fitted in remarkably well with his misfortune of the previous evening. Never before in his extremely eventful life had he been afraid of a thunder-storm, nature had never made any particular impression on him. But last night he had died many deaths, he had called for "mother," and in this lonely and dangerous situation a long-forgotten symbolism imposed itself; he was dead and still not safe. His soul was now being

judged, he might suffer eternal damnation. He pronounced the second forgotten word and whispered, "God . . ." and he prayed for help.

At that moment he noticed Pole's car, which was moving by jerks and starts like a frightened lobster. He had been bogged down, got loose with a great deal of difficulty and had now turned back from sheer necessity.

Redhurst felt insanely grateful when he recognized him. "Good fellow!" he thought. "Hey, can you take me back? This car is out of commission," he shouted.

Pole opened his car door without comment, and heavy Redhurst sat down on the hard front seat against Pole, who was slowly warmed by his contact. The chauffeur climbed into the back. For a quarter of an hour they drove along in silence and then, as suddenly and majestically as it had started, the storm ceased.

The wind subsided, and one could hear in the otherwise arid plain all around the rushing of water. Blue rivulets ran through the red sand, in the suddenly cleared sky now drifted great coral reefs and glowing shells. They drove along a swamp where a thousand little birds boiled and seethed and the bushes swarmed with white butterflies. Storks and herons drifted in the almost white and glittering sky. They were near the hotel, when Redhurst started to speak.

"It is funny that the whole dried-out caboodle does not catch fire through the lightning," he said. He glanced at Pole from the side. Pole's face was relaxed and boyish, almost carefree. He drove with great ease.

"What!" exploded Pole. "But, my good fellow, they find traces of fire everywhere, even in the stone tools. Probably all their wooden objects had been consumed by fire."

"Or rotted away," said Redhurst.

"Not rotted away," said Pole, "it doesn't rain enough for that, it's as dry here as in hell."

They had arrived and climbed out stiffly.

"Come with me," said Redhurst, "I've got a brochure about it." He took Pole's arm.

Mary and Mrs. Northcraft looked on, greatly perplexed to see Redhurst disappearing into the house, arm in arm, and absorbed in hot debate, with his murderer.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

PART VIII

THE DUTCH IN THE WORLD

Beb Vuijk

WAY BAROE

THE HOUSE STOOD ON THE HILLSIDE, FIFTEEN METRES ABOVE THE sea; the crowns of the old cocoanut plantation reached almost to the same height. In the evenings these tops looked like dark birds sleeping, while their feathers moved in the wind. The glistening, white beach formed a path along the edge of the plantations, almost disappearing at high tide and many fathoms wide at low tide; it looked still wider because of the brown coral reefs that smelt of seaweed and putrid fish. Higher up, the coastline curved out into a little spit of land. There the crocodiles kept their kill among the spreading mangrove trees. The cadaverous smell and the aerial roots resembling fleshless bones were reminiscent of death.

The house was large but primitive—thatch walls and a corrugated iron roof. Furniture was scarce, but the children numerous. In the evenings a little oil-lamp was lit, and shadows quivered in the corners. Sometimes a dreaming child would cry out in terror; outdoors, leaves, night animals and the monsoon rain rustled. To the older children this life was familiar, it warmed their hearts; their desires barely reached out beyond the landing-stage.

There was always rice in the larder and chutney—crushed chilli mashed with sugar and salt. Sometimes there were remains of highly seasoned meat, salted eggs or fried fish. They ate when they were hungry, all day long; there were no regular meals. At one o'clock, father came in from the plantations and ate while his wife passed him the side-dishes. By that time the children had eaten, with their fingers, their fill of the warm white rice from a chipped enamel plate, with all kinds of sharp side-dishes; broiled chicken, vegetables boiled in cocoanut milk and fried bananas. They slept in their beds or on a mat under the verandah or in the shade of the lime trees in the back compound.

At the evening meal at eight o'clock, the two eldest were occasionally present, and there was always a loudly squealing baby. Onno Bouvier had long ceased to demand regularity of his fam-

ily. Resignation, submission without struggle and a chronic sapping of the will and conscience made life bearable for one who had taken a girl from these islands to wife and had begotten foreigners for children.

In the mornings he would go to the plantations: the cocoanut plantation between the beach and the hill, and the little coffee plantation on the slopes beside the house. In the afternoons and evenings he would lie stretched on the old ratan chair and read. Books were the only thing the mail brought him. He chose them according to weight: thrillers in periodical form, Lord Lister, Buffalo Bill, detective stories, but also antiquated romance—Hugo, Dumas and Eugène Sue—in cheap editions. Reading was a substitute for the activity he had lost. Literary enjoyment he did not know, he was never struck by a happy figure of speech, descriptions he skipped, the development of a character escaped him. He read for the sake of the story, for fights, murders, ghosts and thrilling adventures.

He had been an inert, taciturn child, in a small town with silted-up harbors where the activity of three centuries had run aground with the old boats on the river banks. There he had lived in the last house at the corner of the harbor and the quay along the river. His father, the notary public, had lived there for years before marriage. His mother had aged early in childless wedlock, when, in the last year of her summer, his life sprang from her death.

The stones of the house had turned brown and the stepped gable leaned forward a little. The freestone steps in front of the house gleamed brightly in the sunlight—a small patch of light between the row of dark houses and the battered green foliage of the elms. The harbor-water was stale and still and of an opaque green like old bottles. It rose and fell with the tide and fed the profuse moss on the weathered quay walls. On the other side stood a mill, its sails turning like flashing swords in the air and, infinitely more appalling in the dark water, distorted by the current and unreal. As the sails stirred the water, the boy screamed. It was an irrational fear—perhaps a horror of death, or a memory of the terrors of his birth—stifled by life. People laughed at his timorousness, but the doctor advised keeping him in the room overlooking the garden on the days the mill operated. Later the sails were brought to a standstill for good.

At school he was a mediocre pupil, not stupid, but slow and absolutely passive. He had no friends, but his schoolmates ceased teasing him because he never defended himself.

From the moment he could spell he read during every free hour. Reading became the only form of activity in his life, a means of substitution for the deeds he himself was unable to perform. He was too tired, too apathetic, too slow of movement and thought, but at the same time he longed for the rapidity, liveliness and tension of a perfect adventure.

When he had passed through three classes of secondary school, for which he took five years, his father kept him at home and made him sit in the office among the clerks. But the doctor prescribed a different mode of life, and so he attended the horticultural school. His movements remained slow but his body grew strong and he became interested in his work.

A year later his father died. The old, unknown man was buried by weeping aunts and an uncle in black clothes. Onno did not join in the weeping; he felt strange, almost hostile, but after a time the former security was restored in part. The notary candidate took over the notariate and looked after his affairs. Four houses in a row, from the blind alley to the quay, were Onno's property. The new notary rented the lower part of the house, and Onno climbed a floor higher, moving into the large corner room. It had double windows that looked out onto the deserted harbor; through the two others the evening sun shone red from the sky and, redder still, was reflected by the broken river water.

After his final examination the notary enquired regarding his plans.

"I don't yet know," answered the boy. He went slowly up to his room where he slept and read. He was restless. The work at the gardens had accustomed him to regular exercise; he could no longer read all day; he could no longer breathe in a closed room. Before he went to bed he threw wide open both the windows overlooking the river. There was little traffic; sometimes he was awakened by a small motor boat which, puffing heavily and steadily, towed a few barges full of vegetables and fruits to the public market in the town.

He was bored without work, yet every job seemed tedious to him, and the free adventures of his books fictitious. Summer faded into autumn. He had to close his window to a mere crack because of the first storms that blew from the north-west. Night fell earlier. The old maid-servant lit the lamp when she brought up the newspaper. He never read the papers—reality seemed to him so unimportant—but in the local paper he followed an enthralling serial.

It was blowing hard. In the harbor a discolored boat splashed

with regular jerks against the half-decayed embankment, but out on the river the water was black and throbbing, breathing rapidly, and there were dashes of white foam like a herd of dark, fleeing animals. Leaving the window, he returned to the table and fingered the newspaper.

"Employee wanted for a cocoanut estate in the Moluccas."

He sat bent over the small advertisement, re-read the words and felt a rising excitement.

The Moluccas, lonely islands in a distant blue sea!

Moluccas! The strange false romantic world of his books distorted the sound of this word into a name out of a story. Islands outside reality, in a zone apart! He was holding his thumb between the most exciting pages of this new book, for there life would become more thrilling than the most thrilling novel! For weeks he had fearfully pushed aside the thought that his life would have to change. This was the change!

All of a sudden he became very active, wrote the letter and went out to post it. With the wind behind him, he ran home with long, awkward strides.

He had lived for twenty-two years but had never thought about anything; and because he did not think, his life was limited to the mechanical things that keep existence going. That evening he tore loose and drifted off with the current. He felt freed and at one with the wind, the rain and the water. He ran along the water's edge with great strides at an unusually quick pace.

Back in his room he could not sleep, so he opened his window and leaned out; the wind and rain stung his face with cold.

The Lanspijckers were an old Molucca family. Having come to these regions in the seventeenth century as ensign and copyist, they grew rich, during the corrupt eighteenth century, in goods and lands which they began to develop at the end of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth the children went to Holland to study, and Egbert Lanspijcker had to find strangers to administer his lands. Gerard, his eldest, had settled down for good as a lawyer in Amsterdam and looked after his father's affairs. He asked Onno Bouvier to come over, in order to make his acquaintance, and he furnished him with all particulars.

The Way Baroe estate was situated on the south coast of Ceram; 62 hectares of cocoanut which would be harvested for the first time the following year, 124 hectares of old plantations in full production and another 62 hectares of clearing. Besides these there was a small coffee plantation on the side of the hill. The

work was done by people from Kei and Boetoeng; the Chinese bookkeeper at the same time looked after the estate shop. Once in two months the K.P.M. Steamship Company called at Way Baroe, and three times a year the owner came to inspect the plantations and to visit his nephew Roel, an eccentric person who helped a little here and there but whose working capacity could not be relied upon.

All these details meant nothing to Bouvier, but he was fully resolved to accept whatever was offered.

He was the only applicant. In Java and Sumatra a well-paid job could always be found, the backward Moluccas, where life was as monotonous and primitive as it had been a hundred years before, attracted nobody. Gerard Lanspijcker thought of his father, a little old man, hesitant in his deportment with strangers though well-spoken and fond of laughter in the circle of his friends. With this quiet, retiring young man he would get on well.

Without further questioning, Onno was accepted.

One month later Onno Bouvier embarked on a German freighter, which was sailing from Antwerp via Port Said and Singapore to Macassar. He was the only passenger besides two nuns who walked the deck or read prayers from small books and merely said: "Good morning" and "Good evening." The broad-shouldered, boisterous captain had tried for three days to keep up a conversation at table; after this he had meals served in his cabin.

Onno lay on his deck chair and started on a new supply of tales of horror. They passed mountains in the distance and sailed close to islands, carelessly strewn in a deserted sea, but called at few ports. Very early one morning they arrived at Macassar, and that same afternoon Onno had to go on to Amboyna with the K.P.M. . . . It was the change of the monsoons. The little ship pitched up and down and from left to right. He was traveling second class with three Chinese traders whose language he did not understand. In the evening the second mate joined them at table and after dinner they smoked a cigarette together at the railing. The mate had sailed on various Molucca lines for four years. He knew the people of Ternate and Hollandia, Fakfak, Banda and Amboyna; he also knew the Lanspijckers and Way Baroe. "And you are going to join Little Roel, the inventor! He makes the most startling discoveries in the most varying fields. He is the most talked-of man in the Moluccas. There are some wonderful stories about him in circulation! He is apparently in the habit of giving

his visitors a choice between two drinks: tea planted and made by himself and so bitter that one feels one's innards contract—but drink this tea by all means, for the other drink is chocolate liqueur which he obtains by chewing cocoa beans, spitting them out and letting them ferment."

Bouvier laughed. It was a joke in keeping with the barbarous history of these islands.

Lanspijcker came on board at Amboyna. The little old man took Onno along to his house outside the town, on the other side of the inner bay. They crossed in a small outrigger proa, two men paddling so fast that the proa's nose got stuck in the white beach. The large open house stood behind a row of cocoanut trees; it had brown thatch walls and a brown thatch roof. But the floor was of red flagstones and it was pleasantly cool in the half-dark inside.

Mother Lanspijcker was supervising her foster-children, who were kneading bread and shoving cookies into the oven. The *Boeroeng Laoet* was to be ready to sail in two days' time, and there was still much baking to be done, cookies, coco and sagae, coffee roasted and ground, and coco pips mashed with spices and red pepper to make chutney. When she heard her husband's voice she came out to meet them—a little brown woman in a white cabaya with batik sarong. To her husband and foster-children she generally spoke the rapid Malay of Amboyna; in honor of the guest she tried to be genteel and jabbered a Dutch that Onno could not understand either.

Coffee, "boebinka" and spiced cake were brought. Lanspijcker lit a pipe with home-grown tobacco and began a lengthy story about a trip with a schooner, full of reverses.

Onno stayed for two days while the *Boeroeng Laoet* took in cargo for her trip round Ceram. He ate and drank with the two old people; he slept in a wide, white bed and, when he opened his eyes, he looked at the green feathery crown of a small dwarf cocoanut tree

After breakfast he sauntered round the large compound in the shade of the fruit trees on the wide sunny lawns where the dogs rolled over and over lazily and a small deer was being suckled by its mother.

On both sides, the length of the house, were the kitchens, bathrooms and old slave quarters built side by side, connected with each other and enclosed by a low white wall. In the middle of the grass in this spacious inner court was a large well, where girls

laughingly did the washing under a green shrub with long, bright red flowers. There was a small pond with ducks diving in it, and on the wall sat a gorgeous peacock letting his flashing tail hang down carelessly. And over everything the sky was golden and blue and cloudless, and between the trees the water of the bay could be seen, glowing like a blue fire.

On the second day came a large canoe; everything was packed into it: bread, sugar, cookies and coffee in petroleum cans, a dinner carrier with freshly fried fish and many spices, and big baskets of fruit. Evangelina sat on the middle hatch surrounded by her boxes. She was the brightest of Mother Lanspijcker's foster-children and spoke a little Dutch and could cook very well. The old woman had generously handed her over to the stranger.

An hour before sunset they embarked on the *Boeroeng Laoet,* a large native proa rigged like a schooner, with an auxiliary motor. They sat on the poop deck under the awning, and the birds chirped in the evening breeze. For three hours they drifted, the sails hoisted and a man at the helm; then they heard the wind come sighing from the slopes of the mountains; the sails grew taut and the water began to gurgle past them noisily. That night Onno slept out-of-doors for the first time between the dark water and the dark sky in which the stars came out after midnight. In the morning they sailed close to the coast of Ceram. The mountains looked green, the water white over the reefs. Behind the gleaming beach mangrove woods fenced off the land. A wooded cape jutted out into the sea; a small bay receded landward; sometimes a mountain as steep as a wall came down to the water's edge.

Lanspijcker lay stretched on his old ratan chair, his shirt open to the navel. He called for drinks, and a small Papuan boy brought some young cocoanuts.

He passed one to Onno; the milk was cool and sweet.

Lanspijcker began to speak of his nephew, knocking out his pipe on the deck the while.

"Little Roel they call him because I don't want them to say 'Crazy Roel.' He isn't crazy; he is smarter than most people, but he lacks the knack to achieve success. I don't know if I am making myself sufficiently clear; perhaps I'd better give you an example. Last year he made some soap of cocoanut oil, but it was twice the price of imported soap. He is now working at reducing the cost price. He never lets failure discourage him; sometimes, in the excitement of a new discovery, he forgets that his previous

work has not yet achieved results. But he looks after the vegetable garden and he will want to help you with everything." "Yes," said Bouvier vaguely for he could think of no other answer.

And Lanspijcker seemed to consider this sufficient.

When, steering carefully between the reefs, they came to Way Baroe at about six o'clock, Little Roel was standing at the jetty, waiting for them.

He had a very dark face, long black hair and restless gray eyes. The most striking thing about him were his clothes—a dark blue shirt and green- and red-checked trousers. Later Onno discovered that he possessed a whole piece of this checked material and had a pair of new trousers made of it every six months.

Lanspijcker remained at Way Baroe for a month to show Bouvier the ropes, and after that he went on to Amahei on the schooner.

Every morning Onno went into the plantations where the lithe Kei Islanders casually clasped a high cocoanut tree with their hands, placed a foot between their arms against the trunk and ran up to the crown of leaves twenty metres above the ground. They threw the nuts down to where other coolies picked them up, split them open and laid the hard, white kernels on the cement floor in the sun to dry. The producing plantations required little upkeep; most of his time he spent on the clearings near the boundaries, two hours' walk away. The cocoanut trees there had been planted the year before and the first feathery leaves were coming out between the smooth cotyledons. A few had been attacked by cocoanut beetles and had to be looked over every week; the young green manure had withered on account of the premature drought, and at the edge of the plantations Onno one morning found ten young cocoanut trees uprooted by a herd of boars. Little Roel built a small hut of bamboo and thatch and shot seven boars in three nights, after which the animals did not show up again. Ina cut the meat into thin slices, smeared it with salt and salpetre and dried it in the sun.

In the mornings, before the sun grew hot, Roel worked in the little kitchen garden, gathering beans and cucumbers and picking caterpillars off the cabbages. Later he worked at a cement tank in which he wanted to keep fish, an absolutely superfluous job in a country where every child with a pin on a wire could catch fish. Roel ordered two barrels of cement from Amboyna and used one for his fish tank. The other remained lying in the back compound for a year and hardened in the rain and sun.

For Onno the days became monotonous, like a tune too fre-

quently repeated. In the mornings the walk through the plantations and the trip back in the bright, hot noontide light; after the meal and afternoon nap he checked the copra on the drying floors and the germinating nuts in the nursery beds behind the vegetable garden. In the evenings he read, lying on the long ratan chair, while Little Roel worked at an intricate design under the hissing oil lamp. At night he slept in a big bed with Ina.

"Be good to her," Lanspijcker had said. "Perhaps you might marry her when there is a little one."

One hundred, two hundred, three hundred days, one year. No change but the rain in the west monsoon and the scorching days during the season of the east winds. The rush of weighing and finishing the sacks of copra three days before the K.P.M. boat called, and two or three times a year a visit of Lanspijcker with tins full of food and many stories.

Onno had long since returned to the excitement of his books. While turning a page he would look languorously at the blue water that sparkled between the crowns of the old cocoanut trees. On the other side of the bay lay the village of Way Baroe, where the Administrative Officer and the missionary lived. Onno never went there.

The view over the cocoanut trees and the strip of white foam over the reefs, the screech of a bird of prey and the cry of a pig overtaken by a crocodile, had violently excited him in the first few months, but after that they had become part of the ordinary stuff of the landscape. The old decay, temporarily halted, had started to spread again; a listlessness like an illness, a sort of numbness of the mind, paralyzed his energy. Once he had stood erect, and the landscape of those days, Lanspijcker's house at Amboyna, the trip on the *Boeroeng Laoet,* and the first months on Way Baroe stood out sharply in his memory. They were very clear days, transparent and raised out of reality in a bright, feverish dream. But after that the light that burnt brightly behind things flickered out; a mist rose, a fatigue of body and weariness of mind. He had made an attempt to escape the cobweb and damp of an old house, but in this new country, under a brighter light and in a spacious room, he lay befuddled and listless, incapable of fresh deeds and too tired to attempt complicated thought.

Roel worked on steadily. He had taken over two cows from the missionary, and in the evenings he designed a churn of a very special construction; it was provided with little wings so that the wind could churn it. He needed wood for the construction, but

since by chance there was no hewn wood on hand and since his genius burned within him, he took one of the wooden corbels from under the house and put the barrel of hardened cement in its place. It fitted exactly and withstood the great earthquake of '28. The story of the exchanged corbel circulated all over the Moluccas. The churn was a complete success, but for the time being the buttermilk tasted of the tar of the corbel, and the butter remained too soft to spread.

Shortly after that, Onno's first son was born. Lanspijcker came over from Amboyna with a trunk full of children's clothes and some stout for the mother, and a message from his wife that they would now have to marry. And, because there was no reason whatever not to do so, they married, first before the Administrative Officer and afterwards before the missionary. It was the first time in two years that he had gone to the village of Way Baroe.

This child died, probably owing to an over-measure of good care; but another was born, again a son, and after that the children came every year, as regularly as the monsoon rain; and most of them remained alive. Occasionally Onno was vaguely surprised by their number—he was easily tired and not very sensual, but Ina bore a child every year of her youth, fruitful as a cocoanut tree.

Roel's death had nothing to do with his inventions. He was fishing with dynamite and the cartridge exploded in his hand, about the height of his face. Some Boegoengese fishermen brought him to Bouvier. His hand was entirely blown off and his head partly so, but the red- and green-checked trousers made an exact identification superfluous. He was buried in the cocoanut plantation next to Onno's children, who had not yet been christened.

In the year that his first clearing began to produce, copra dropped below cost price. Lanspijcker came over, and together they talked about the retrenchments to be made. The workmen whose contracts had expired were not replaced; less weeding was done and a stop was put to clearing. On her way home the *Boeroeng Laoet* ran aground on a reef off Amahei and sprang a leak. It was Lanspijcker's last trip, for he felt too old to get accustomed to a new boat.

A year later Bouvier unexpectedly received forty thousand guilders. In Holland a wide highroad was being constructed from North to South, and the old houses on the quiet harbor had to be pulled down in order to lay the foundation of a bridge. His father's successor, who had looked after his affairs for years, asked

him in what to invest this free money. Without this problem Onno would probably never have thought of buying Way Baroe, but now he wrote to Lanspijcker for advice, and the old man, glad that his property would not pass into the hands of strangers, let him have the house and plantations for a fairly low price. It became still quieter on Way Baroe now that the work had almost stopped and the old man did not come any more. Times were bad; despite all retrenchments copra fetched barely more than cost price. But these worries scarcely touched Onno. Ina looked after his clothes, his food, all his bodily requirements without ever inviting attention to herself in any way. His children tumbled about him, learned to walk, grew up and had to attend school on Amboyna. He never missed them. He was never particularly unhappy or particularly happy. He had escaped for good the storms and lulls of life in this last bay. At noon he lay on his chair, listened to the breakers beating against the reefs like a distant thunderstorm and read. This reading became an increasingly parasitic form of life; only in this way did he take part in the existence of people. As others lived for alcohol or opium, so Onno Bouvier lived for the stimulus of his books.

There are many half and many completely crazy people on the Moluccas, confused by the might and the loneliness and the terrible monotony of their days. But Bouvier, fleeing from the land of the living, found a refuge there, unerringly led to the secure house and blue bay of dreams from which one need never return.

Translated by Jo Mayo

Cola Debrot

MY SISTER THE NEGRO

Frits Ruprecht peered into the impenetrable darkness. Gradually his eyes grew accustomed to the night, but it was so dark that objects could only be distinguished by a smaller or larger degree of blackness, or rather by their rustling. It was only in the distance that he saw some fluttering lines of light upon the sea, between the dark, looming rock masses of the rocky coast. The northern coast of the island was so inaccessible that the narrow light, which he saw from here, had formerly served only as a

playground for Frits and his white and colored little boy and girl companions. Among them was Karel, who later on used to go hunting with him. To them also belonged his niece, of whom he carried a painful memory from that afternoon in town; she stood between the pillars of her spare body, with her rather large feet, but also with her clear blue eyes and her golden hair; they laughed at him. Even as they played on the plantation they always laughed at him. All the games that Karel, with his light forget-me-not-blue eyes, invented, she thought marvelous. She only contemptuously curled up her lips at the lovely shells with their pink insides, which Frits found on the beach, as with a caustic movement of her hand she threw back her hair, which blew across her forehead. No, she had not cared particularly for him.

Over there they had played too. Over there, the large leaves of the cocoa and the date palms rustled. A single glimmer of light, of a heaven knew how many centuries distant star struck the metal leaves. The rustling of the sea mixed with the rustling of the leaves, then again each separated from the other, so that two motifs were distinguishable by themselves. . . . The rustling music awoke in him the memory of another fourteen-year-old girl. . . . A feeling of gratitude arose in the heart of Frits Ruprecht for his small Negro friend, Maria, who always took his side against that of his small niece and who in turn found all Karel's games tiresome and preferred the more innocuous ones of Frits.

In the garden, where the cocoa and date palms rose above the clustered groups of mango and medlar trees, moss-grown stone benches were scattered; built in the times of slavery, they had no other purpose than to allow one to listen to the rustling of the palm grove: the rhythmic scrubbing of the leaves against each other, the periods of breathless stillness, the distant creaking of a branch or a twig.

Little Frits had then invented the game of climbing on the stone benches and of simply sitting close together. His little niece, of course, thought it a silly game and would go off with Karel. For long minutes Frits would sit there with Maria and they would both count how many times they could hear the wood pigeons coo in the distance. A heartfelt cooing, which came from deep in the breast.

Frits vividly remembered the young colored girl. Among the fairly well-mixed Negroes of the island hardly any were as black as she. But there was something remarkable about her: the shape

of her skull, her nose, her lips were those of white people, they had almost nothing negroid. Even her movements were typical of white folk, with the angularity of movements in the joints, the quadrocento-like quality of her gait, which the supple Negroes do not have and which among the whites often degenerates into woodenness Maria did not create the impression of being a mulatto, but a pure-race Negro girl in whom certain characteristics of some far-distant forefather were again manifesting themselves. Ruprecht had felt the urge later on, while he was already traveling in Europe, to obtain some information about the girl in the days of his youth. Gradually a continuous story developed from what he heard about her, which however he had again forgotten years ago. She was the child of the eldest daughter of a rent collector. The mother had not survived her birth. Her father had cared little about her. He was one of those men about whom it can be said that they did not "behave." His name was Theodore. As Frits Ruprecht had done, he had got lost in Europe. Frits had met him as a waiter in The Hague and also as a doorman of an establishment in Paris, which Frits principally frequented in order to see lesbians dancing together. Their faces were so tragic that they looked like drowned people who had just been pulled out of the water.

That was father Theodore. The daughter Maria had, with the help of Ruprecht's parents, been enabled to study as a teacher, third class, at the normal school in the only city in the island. There she was qualified to stand day in, day out, with somewhat astonished eyes before the poor Negro children, who with their arms neatly folded upon their breasts monotonously and in chorus repeated the following in a row: ab, bc, cd . . . three, four, five; one, two, three. . . . That afternoon in the city the chorus had reached him from one of the buildings, but he had hardly paid any attention to it. Perhaps it was she who directed the chorus. At any rate he resolved to look her up before he took the boat again and left the island behind him. But in spite of anticipation of strange adventure he knew he would not remain here for long and that his short stay would be limited to talks with the old notary. He took a few steps backward until his heels touched the threshold.

He was teetering on the narrow threshold. He now felt a smile spread over his face; he was not a bit happy, but he felt as if he had been taken into a sphere of well-being. In front of him lay the night, which he had peopled with tender images from his

youth. Behind him in the living-room he heard the tinkling of knives and forks and the sound of plates as they were put upon the table. It was the housekeeper preparing his meal.

"How dark it is tonight! In Europe they think that there is always either a bright moon or starlit night in the tropics."

The housekeeper did not answer.

"When does the moon rise?"

"There is no moon tonight," she answered in such a clear voice that he was almost tempted to turn around and look at the woman to whom this voice belonged. But he did not turn around. He still wanted to stand that way for a while: teetering back and forth, behind him the light of the lamp suspended from the ceiling, the tinkling and the noise of crockery, the woman's sandals shuffling over the cement.

It gave him a safe and almost caressing feeling that the housekeeper was continually moving around him, like a cat that one can hardly see but of whose presence one is continuously conscious. He was quite satisfied that he had not turned around; it was exactly right that way, to know her to be around him without having looked at her.

The housekeeper, a small Negro woman, stood bent over the suspended lamp, which through the reflection on the white tablecloth seemed to increase its light many times; carefully she fixed something on the table. When she was ready, she took up the tray on which she had brought in the plates and the food, and walked slowly through the arcade to the kitchen, where she put the empty tray on a table. As she left the room, she had looked out of the corner of her eye at Frits Ruprecht, who was still standing with his back towards her. In the kitchen she blew up the fire in the stove, then sat at the table and thoughtfully rubbed her forehead with her fingers. Then she got up, lit the lantern and went outside. The wind blew against her skirt, which barely reached her knees. Slowly she walked along the terrace in the dark. The lantern swung gently like an incense burner. The light fell occasionally on a cactus stem, which would suddenly spring out of the dark and reach up to the sky. In the shrubs the lizards would wake and rustle along the leaves. The light swung over the bare soil, and even the smallest piece of gravel would throw a shadow. At a luxuriously overgrown piece of ground which was in sharp contrast to its surroundings, she put down her lantern and crouched. Patches of light and dark interchanged between the leaves and stems. The body of the woman too was fragmentarily struck by light: her neck, her face, her legs. A single beam

of light struck the point of her sandal. She saw now that a snail shell tottered over a few lumps of earth. On a heart-shaped leaf a caterpillar was upset by the unsteady light and stuck half its body into the air. A flower bud thrust up out of the darkness, where it was separated from its stem which had just received the light from underneath. The woman dug with both hands between the leaves and the tendrils of the melons, pulled and plucked one of the melons as her lips pressed together from the effort.

In the meantime Frits sat down at the table with a smile on his face. A contented, indifferent smile, now that the chewing of the food brought him back to reality and to distrust of more or less complicated stories through which one human being tries to fool another. He had been told that Maria was Theodore's daughter. That might be so. But it could also be different. He interrupted his meal and put down his knife and fork. Jaws closed, eyes peering, he followed his malicious train of thought. He himself came from the island, he knew the circumstances, he could look through fabrications. So he would not have been astonished to come to the conclusion some day that the unkempt Theodore was not the father, but that Alexander Ruprecht, his own father, *was*. He knew that men like Theodore, who ended up in Europe's bars, were often chosen to cover up for the sins of white gentlemen. But there remained one thing through which these white sinners betrayed themselves; they gave their hidden children an education which made the children and, themselves too, suspect in the eyes of others. What betrays man mostly is his own heart with its irrepressible feelings. . . .

Frits turned his head. He heard the shuffling sandals in the back of the house. He would have liked to have talked with someone, but she had already disappeared into the room to the right at the back of the house, where she probably slept. Frits smiled and repeated significantly, almost obscenely to himself: "Where she is probably sleeping." Talking half aloud to himself as he raised his index finger and threatened an imaginary person opposite him: "Yes, my little papa, what I don't know about your doings. We here on the plantation are perhaps all your children, O father who art in heaven."

His face became clouded immediately thereafter, the uncalled-for observation and lightheartedness of the voice seemed to belong to somebody older than himself. He pursued his meal as quietly as a mouse, corrected by his own childhood conscience. Then he got up. From a chair nearby he took a briefcase, in which he had brought the most essential material. He went into

the room to the right, in which he used to sleep, opposite the door which he had closed because two glowing eyes came towards him. He left the door open, until he found an oil-lamp on a table with a copper plate as reflector. He fussed around with the lamp, lit the wick and put the chimney over it again. The room had no windows, but a second door, which led on to the terrace. There was a sort of camp bed. He remembered how he had yearned in Europe to sleep on just such a bed, principally because one used no blankets, merely two sheets. On the wall was a framed print, which he also remembered, representing a very young girl kneeling in her nightgown, with folded hands: pre-Raphaelite. He had seen the original in the Tate Gallery; that is, unless he was mistaken. There he had remained in front of it for a long time, because it looked like a copy of the print on the faraway plantation, just as the face, which he was now probing in the round mirror above the table, seemed a crushed copy of his former childhood face. He remembered now how he had had to have his hair cut quite short, because even the slightest length meant something incredibly dirty to his father. Therefore the parting on his brow became a lock like Napoleon's, which he himself had always found ridiculous. Brusquely he opened the table. There were many shells in it. He remembered how his father, who had enjoyed few things, sometimes showed great enthusiasm over the shells: "Give your father that shell, Frits."

Did the shells he had given his father still exist? Then they must be in one of the drawers of his father's desk. He would find out. Quickly he walked out of the room. He had already jerked open the door. He wanted to see the three-master in a bottle and the hooded typewriter and the rifles and the pistols; it was from the study, too, that in the absence of his father he would climb up the ladder and lift the trapdoor and see the bats, swaying like flakes of black cotton. The memory of these spooky animals did not cause him fear when, thinking himself safe, as a small boy he chased into one room and out of another and went busily back and forth through the parental home. He recognized the dent in the doorknob; it felt familiar in his grasp. He had already entered the living-room and was crossing towards the entrance of the house, when he stopped involuntarily.

In the furthest arch, on the side of the kitchen, he had seen the face, the face of Maria. The shock made the blood course irregularly through his body. The tips of his fingers tingled, almost hurt him. He stood there like a ninny, both of his hands stretched out in front of him, and there was empty surprise in his eyes and

face. Slowly the shock subsided, he heard the ticking of the mahogany wall clock, which was in back of the house; he had noticed its ticking before during the evening. The quietness of the living-room, illuminated by the light of the oil-lamp, caused a stream of well-being to flow through his body. It was remarkable how the aspect of things can modify one's state of mind. The same room which before that night had made him feel uneasy with its aura of circular light, into which he had plunged himself as if into something immaterial, now calmed him by the harmlessness of its countrified illumination. For a long time Ruprecht had not stood in its peaceful light. He looked up at the oil-lamp. His glance followed around the bowl the metal band from which it was suspended by three chains attached from the ceiling above the table. The minute clamps, through which the wick pressed closer to the glass, even mellowed him, because the little details again evoked the past. It seemed almost impossible that in this peaceful atmosphere he would be pursued by images forced upon his mind. Was it reality or just hallucination? No matter how peaceful the light in the living-room appeared to be, the double shadows along the arches of the arcade continued to conjure up the adored picture: the face of Maria. Or rather, as he imagined the face of Maria as it had developed from girlhood into maturity. Framed by the arch it looked like the pious enlargement of the familiar photograph of a woman who had died young. She had on a white linen blouse, which was tucked into a black skirt. It was a European profile; her hair too stood out further than was usually the case with Negro women. . . . But it was not impossible. . . . He also heard the shuffling of the housekeeper's sandals. And Maria could not possibly be housekeeper here. She was a teacher in the city, with the monks and nuns who brought religion and religious education to the small Negroes of the island. Mere coincidence. The housekeeper bore some resemblance to Maria, which was not surprising; she was perhaps—no, even most probably—a relative of Maria's. . . . Despite this, he hurried, almost ran, to the kitchen. As he sped along the arcade his own shadow floated like a black cloak from his shoulders. He found no one in the kitchen. The fire in the brazier had already been put out, in the semi-darkness he saw a cat curled up on the cane seat of a chair.

He retraced his steps. First the glowing eyes and now the face of Maria. What would all this lead to? Why did this woman move so invisibly around him? She had cleared the table, while he was dreaming in his bedroom over pictures in the Tate Gal-

lery. Why this invisible prowling about him? In the study he opened one of the desk drawers. The drawer was empty, only one of the boards had been stained by ink spots. In the other drawer was a browning, next to a yellow ruler and an electric torch which he tried out; the browning and the torch he put on the table; then he closed the drawer. In the next drawer were only a few wads of paper upon an opened package of candles. It was only in the fourth drawer that he found the shells which he had gathered for his father on the white sand near the sea. Frits turned the shells over and over in his hand; with his fingers he felt the protuberances of the shells, but he had no longer any interest in the multicoloredness of the shells and their nacreous texture, which he had formerly so much admired. He stared vaguely ahead, he saw the face framed by the arcade; for just a moment he had seen the eyes glance sideways, frightened, as if Frits meant disaster. Had he ever signified disaster to Maria? Again his thought wandered back to the young girl with whom he had once sat on the moss-grown stone benches in the palm garden. His heart flinched with pity. . . . He remembered how he had once scolded Maria. He had then seen her lips tremble, but she had immediately and resolutely pressed them together, as a brave girl who did not want to cry. . . . Before the first tear had been shed, he had kissed her, somewhere on her cheek. . . .

Who knows how unhappy she might have felt later on? . . . When a colored boy became a teacher, then it was plain what made him do so, what he had in view. He wanted to get on in the world, to be a servant no longer. A girl like Maria, on the contrary, became a teacher because she wanted to do what was expected of her, nothing more. . . . Who had demanded of her that she become a teacher? . . . A girl like Maria was apt to return to her former origin, as Frits had done. . . . Who knows whether she had not exchanged her teacher's position in a girl's school in the city because of an inner urge for life on a plantation, compelled from within by her origin, she had taken off her stockings as well as her high-heeled slippers?

Frits was letting his fancy run wild as he handled the shell. Finally he dropped it among the others in the drawer; he chose another, to which he gave more attention than the first. In his fancy he became convinced that it was really Maria whom he had seen. And into his fancy gradually crept a strange jubilation.

She had taken off her stockings as well as her high-heeled slippers. Again she stood in her sandals, just as she had when playing

with Frits in different places in the plantation, the beach and the palm garden; perhaps too in the small garden, which they had both made, directly behind the house; they had sown some bean and melon seeds and also mysterious seeds filched from the drawers which would develop from something unknown into something familiar in the future. Who knows but that Maria had enlarged that garden patch and that she would still attentively sit on her haunches next to a blade with two seed pods, or next to the tendrils of the melons, which are hazy and hairy like the legs of an insect? Perhaps she even cultivated those useless things called flowers: the rose, the dahlia, the camellia. . . . But who or what could have persuaded her to give up her teaching and return here to the plantation? It might have happened like this: She might have fallen ill in the arid lifeless city. Not only that the slippers with the high heels pinched her. . . . No. The nuns and the monks must not have neglected to exercise their dreadful pressure upon her. She must have been taken ill and therefore have spent a few weeks with her grandfather, the rent collector. Then she must have gone back. Then returned, ill again. And on a certain day the thought must have taken root in her mind: never to go back again, never to wear those shoes again with high heels, never to climb on the bus again which passed there twice a day, never to wait again upon Mother Superior. . . . To stay here . . . amidst the melons, the roses, the palm trees. . . . The northern Trade wind blew in her hair. . . . Life became melancholy again, but filled with the significance that she missed elsewhere.

Frits Ruprecht smiled tenderly. In order to achieve this she must have told the rent collector a story. He must have shown surprise in his faraway, staring eyes when a girl made up her mind to exchange her genteel teacher's position for that of a common servant girl on a plantation.

But perhaps she had not told the rent collector any stories. Perhaps she had never come back to the plantation and it was purely Frits' imagination. But he also found it impossible to tear himself away from the almost frightening charm of the other possibility, that only a few meters separated him from her, that he needed only to push the door open to experience again the sweetness of her presence. Frits felt the irresistible urge to go to Maria's room, to awaken her, to question her thoroughly as to why she had done this. And whether his father had assisted her in doing this. . . . And whether she wanted to stay here always.

. . . And to stay here without a man . . . and wither away slowly. . . . And fade out like an autumn leaf which sinks deeper towards the bottom and dies.

Frits put away the shells, gathered them in a group, as he had found them. Slowly he closed the drawer; it hardly moved. Frits thought: Why shouldn't I go to her and comfort her who really is my sister; the Negro? It could be pretty well established that she really was his sister, that she was not the daughter of Theodore who turned revolving doors for lesbian drowned souls, but of Alexander Ruprecht, Frits' father, who one night as unexpectedly as the inner rosiness of a shell had been enraptured by the daughter of his rent collector.

With a violent shove Frits closed the drawer and ran out to the study. In the hall he noticed that the woman had again wandered through the house, while he was thinking of Maria in the study. She had extinguished the lights in the hall and the back of the house; only in the living-room the light burned low. A woman was wandering around him in ever narrowing circles, or was it he who moved around her and came ever closer? As he was approaching her room, once more but now for the last time, a doubt assailed him: whether she was Maria and whether Maria was really his sister? But then he dropped all doubt, because he no longer cared for mental calculations, he was in another world. He had already reached the door of her room. He opened it, took one step and still another, but did not let go of the doorknob and did not close the door. In the darkness he noticed that she lay there without breathing. An unexpected change in his feelings for Maria took place. He listened to the buzz of the silence, he heard the coursing of his own blood. The fragrance of a woman hung in the room. It was as if the unexpected, the shining newness met him. It was no longer the child Maria which made him feel mellow, but the woman who wholly enraptured him. . . . Maria, or that other one, who resembled her and could be none but Maria this very night. . . . He thought about it; how they both so strangely happened to meet this night. . . . Here, where everything was so faraway from Asia, America, Europe with all its somber strivings, in which, unless he were mistaken, he had participated for a very short time. How trifling their two powerless slowly breathing bodies seemed to him—like the animals in the compound—in this white house on the hill, where every glimmer of light and every noise in the night was absorbed by the rustling of palms and sea. It was not only the mollifying loneliness that drove him to her. In his vivid imagination he saw

the sweet little sister grown into a young woman. He looked on enraptured. And this enraptured consideration of her familiar girl's body awakened in him the desire for feminine completeness, for her embrace, for the curves of her body. His hand was still resting on the doorknob. He still heard that she lay there, still, breathless. With his heart beating in his throat he closed the door. He could not see his hand as he put it in front of his eyes, it was so dark. . . .

Maria, or the other one, did not offer any resistance; she did not even make a feeble attempt. The arms that wound around his neck embraced him ever more closely; then she let him go and, keeping at an arm's length, told him: Do you know, Frits, how you always stayed in my memory? As a small boy, apart from the others, with your two crowns, that lock, that bitter little mouth. . . .

For a moment he had been startled, because it was now undeniably established that it was Maria. But laughingly he closed her arms around him· little hateful Frits. His body relaxed in her embrace until it was he that embraced and her body that relaxed. Already his hand caressed her hip, already the fervor of his heart changed into the desire for her body, when suddenly a violent rattling at the door penetrated his consciousness. Suddenly Frits stood straight up beside the bed. Tears of fury sprang into his eyes. And in his mouth he tasted bitterness. He snarled at her:

"Have you a man in the neighborhood?"

"A man, Frits?"

"No jokes now. Have you a man? Yes or no?"

"No. What is the matter, Frits? Let me open the door."

"No. You stay here."

They shouldn't get him. It was not that easy to get at Frits Ruprecht. He locked her door; he still heard her voice, "But Frits, why are you doing that? . . ." In the room he extinguished the lamp, so that the house was completely dark. He went to his father's study, caught up the browning, took out the cartridge slip; it was empty. He opened the drawers two at a time; there were no bullets to be found anywhere. He found the cartridges for the hunting rifle in the corner of the room. He slung the browning and the cartridge clip over the table. He grabbed the hunting rifle, loaded it. He put the remaining cartridges as well as the electric torch into his pocket. He closed the door behind him; from here no light could penetrate into the house. Through the dark hallway he walked to the front door. Again it rattled.

The rattle made him beside himself with fury. At the door he stood still, held his breath and listened. Just as the rattling started again, he jerked the door open. At the same time he directed the light of the torch upon the visitor and the faraway staring eyes of the rent collector.

"What do you want here at this hour, Wantsjo? I thought you all still went to bed at eight o'clock. This is the third time today that you've bothered me. Couldn't you wait until morning?"

"Mister Frits . . ."

"Never mind Mister Frits. Get out and go to bed. Tomorrow we can talk again."

"Mister Frits . . ."

"I remember how you were. In the middle of the night you disturb people and this way you think you can have your way."

"I don't want anything, Mister Frits."

"We know all about that. A goat for the feast of Aunt Carolina. Or a rabbit for the feast of Aunt Esmeralda. You'll get it all. All right. But tomorrow. Not tonight. And now off to bed, Wantsjo. I do not want to hear any more rattling at the door. Sleep well."

At the moment that he wanted to slam the door in Wantsjo's face, he heard a shriek which was as unreal as when, some time before, he had opened the door of his mother's bedroom.

"Maria is your father's daughter!!"

With a jerk he opened the door anew. He did not know exactly what happened then. He had probably slipped on the worn threshold, fallen as his arms clutched the air, on account of which the barrel of the rifle hit Wantsjo in the chest. When he had straightened himself out and stood straight up again, his first thought was: "It's lucky that the cock was not released, in addition to all that has happened." He helped up old Wantsjo, who had fallen down as he was struck and was softly moaning. He had to do this as he felt his way along. It was pitch dark; he did not see any stars, the sky was heavily overcast. Ruprecht had difficulty hiding his emotions from the other, who still had not overcome his fright and whose teeth were audibly chattering.

"Nothing has happened, Wantsjo. I just slipped, so that the gun hit your chest. It was your chest, wasn't it?"

"Yes, my breast. . . ." He could barely utter the words.

"Shall I make a light and see what's happened to it?"

"No, not inside. Maria must not know anything about this. I only got a shock, I am not hurt."

"Well, all right then, Wantsjo. Let me lead you away until you have overcome your fright."

Wantsjo allowed himself to be led by the arm, as Ruprecht soothed him.

"I only slipped. You must not think any more about it. You must also know that I had a faint suspicion that Theodore was used as a cloak. It was easy for me to guess as much when my father sent Maria to a school to become a teacher. I need keep nothing from you. You are an old man; to my father your life was more valuable than mine, you have a right to know everything."

The gravel on the drive crunched under their feet. A glowworm shone and disappeared, the only point of light in the night. Along the way the old man rested his arm on Ruprecht's; the latter realized that he must accompany him a little way further.

"I admit, Wantsjo, that your granddaughter is a beautiful girl. You are black, but comely, you daughters of Jerusalem. Do you remember that from the Song of Songs? I suspect that you know the Bible better than I. If I hadn't had the slightest doubt about it, then perhaps there might have been something to be afraid of. But, Wantsjo, my good Wantsjo, why should I have been in such a hurry?"

Ruprecht felt that the arm which he supported was beginning to disengage itself from him.

"Wantsjo, I believe that you think that I am worse than I am."

He heard Wantsjo shuffle at his side. He could have walked that way for hours beside the old man, silently and thoughtlessly. But he did not want to be a burden to him; as soon as he saw that the other no longer needed his support, he took leave.

"Well, Wantsjo. Let's shake hands. Sleep well."

"Sleep well, Mister Frits. Don't blame me. I have seen so much unhappiness. Unhappiness to others which I could have prevented."

For a moment, the old Negro's hand rested in the hand of the young white man.

"Sleep well, Wantsjo."

The two separated. Wantsjo continued on his way. Ruprecht looked in the direction in which the other had disappeared, until he could hear the steps no longer. Irresolutely he remained standing in the quietness, but turned around abruptly as he heard some rustling behind his back. He listened. It sounded as if people were whispering. For a moment he even imagined that he heard muffled footsteps and giggling. He held himself prepared, was sharply on his guard; it sounded like the whispering and

laughing of people. But it must have come to him from the gusts of wind in the palm grove, as the trees swayed back and forth, creaked and rustled. For some reason it reminded him of Karel, who, as a child, could not laugh without malice. But Karel was now reading *Othello,* with his mysterious smile, which was part will-power and part enmity. This rather unpleasant memory of Karel passed as quickly as the breeze which blew through his hair. . . . Frits turned around. The road back was hard, but he had found a sister, where he had lost a sweetheart. He was so tired that only for a moment did he look for excuses to offer Maria, so tired that he wanted to give up immediately.

Come what may! When, however, he unlocked the door and found her room lighted, he understood immediately that the cry of anguish of Wantsjo had also penetrated here. She was half sitting up in bed, her wide, open eyes were looking down. He sat next to her, but did not know what to say and also gazed at the floor. Finally he put an arm around her shoulder. He pressed his face against hers. She allowed him to do as he wanted, but her face, unliké his mother's formerly, did not answer his pressure. Thus they sat next to each other and began to rock slowly back and forth. Doing this he made, as he used to do with his mother, the humming sound that came deep out of his chest and he did not unclench his teeth. Tears streamed from her eyes. . . . Life became sad, but it became filled with a significance which was nowhere else. And this is the only thing which cannot be taken away from the children of this earth.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

Albert Helman

SOUTH-SOUTH-WEST

HE WHO IS AFRAID WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO PENETRATE INTO THE interior of my country. The journey there is so long that all links must be broken, that one must give up all things. The heart of my country is a swampy forest, impenetrable with climbing plants and lianas. A forest completely isolated. Who goes there rides in a canoe with grinning death; therefore strangers are afraid to journey into the interior; they do not go any further than where the railroad stops in the woods. But what child of

this country is afraid to see the beauty of its own home? No animal harms him and no evil vapors. He threads down the moist leaves until they become a path and the lianas are woven into a fence. Quietly he looks over the black swamps and finds a spot where he can wade through.

To reach the heart of my country a voyage is required, more difficult than the most exhausting pilgrimage. The journey through the forests brings mortal danger; the navigation of the undulating river, above the falls where the water churns foaming downwards between the rocks, means the cool-blooded challenge of death. Its hand is that of the long stick of the Negro who steers it at the end of the canoe. On the bank downstream one can still see the splintered wood of a previous boat, which was smashed to pieces.

But whoever is once able to overcome it, crosses over the high thresholds of these pitfalls into the mystery of the back country, there where there are steep, bare mountains with enormous, strange inscriptions, geometrical patterns which must have the deep meaning of unknown words.

There are also the fertile, fat mountains, solidly forested with precious wood: purple and bronze-green wood, brown mahogany and yellow cedar, hard as steel or brittle as kindling wood. At their feet grow medicinal herbs and plants that produce paralyzing poisons.

There are no valleys. For tens of centuries they have been overgrown and the mountain brooks have gathered their water in the forests. At the foot of the mountains are the endless swamps, stretching as far as do the lowlands. In those valleys grow mushrooms more than a metre in circumference and insects build their own towering nests; there wasps make their multicolored honeycombs. There humming birds and large silvery-colored butterflies and golden-green bees gather; a monkey vanishes between the branches, and in the distance one hears a tiger crossing a creek.

There are large, velvety wood spiders and the big, brown poisonous snake that is called the mother of the forest, and the snake with the scorpion's tail that is called the "father snake." Here reigns the undisputed hierarchy of the beast and the Negro, who is at home in the woods, calls all animals "brother," with the exception of the tiger, whom he addresses as "little father" and the snake, whom he dare not address in familiar terms.

Here also lives the good-natured anteater with his pointed snout, from whose embrace nobody escapes, and the opossum

with its musky odor, and the skunk, whom everybody avoids. Here, also, from the low branches the sloths with their long rusty fur are suspended, who only move a few metres in seven years, and the black tapirs who dully break the branches which are in their way. There, and there alone, exists a zoological garden.

Throughout this sort of forest and along these untrodden paths human beings risk themselves on their way to the high plateaux where they will look for gold. But mostly the forests close down over them for eternity. The sultry vapors of the forest, treacherously mingled with the fine odors of musk and tonkas, befog their thought, and the hypnotic stares of the animals paralyze their limbs; the poisonous sweetness of the water disturbs their bloodstream and dulls their vision. The hot dream of gold leads them into the labyrinth of tough lianas. The metre-high petals of the carnivorous flowers enclose them. They never return. In the forest the country avenges itself upon the thirst for gold of the city dwellers. Only a few reach the gold fields. Do they find there the gold dust at the bottom of the creeks or in small gold fragments deep in the soil, or in small flakes in the red granite? Emaciated they return to the city, and their treasure has become a dream after one day. The color of gold has blinded their eyes, and they have seen nothing of the luxury and the beauty, there where even the condor is astounded at so much green.

Once a year the family came from the camp to the city; Captain George and three or four men and women. Then they would be busy in the house with rifles and game bags, quivers of arrows, hammocks and colorful materials. Everybody brought along a little of the air of the forest. They only came to the city when there was some trouble with the government, or when the gold seekers had trampled upon their rights. Then the father had to tell their long story—long because it was told in short, slowly made-up sentences—with much head shaking, and everything had to be written down, so that the Governor, who was the chief forester of the mysterious Woman on the other side of the sea, would realize the injustice and correct it. George looked like his father; they might have been brothers, and they acted as brothers and called each other by first name. The other men and women were mostly silent during the time they stayed with us. How magnificently brown-red they were painted with the sap of the koesoewe, how gracefully their strong legs were hung with rope ornaments, the amulets of the tiger's teeth shining whitely around their bare

throats! Their hair knots were brilliant black, and the older people had a protruding lower lip in which a pin was coquettishly stuck. Magnificent people of the Caribbean, small but solidly built, with broad shoulders, strong legs that had trod the savannahs for centuries, strong arms which tautly stretched the bows and ended almost conically in their small, graceful wrists! Had ever a dying people had such strong offspring?

The light of the sun shone like metal over their smooth heads, over their smooth chests. The women carried their quiet, almost timorous babies upon their backs, never separating from them as long as they were still dependent. With one movement of the arm they shove the baby under the armpit, whence it happily partakes of the motherly fare; with one movement it is again hoisted up on their backs, where it sleeps as they travel, as if in its own hammock. They wear few clothes; the sultry wind of the savannahs, the sunlight itself, covers them with a warm cloak which does not fall in false folds. They are all tanned to a soft brown through sun and sap. But, coming to the city, the women have thrown a gay cloth over their shoulders—black, red, yellow and blue—which half covers their breasts.

With a few words Captain George extended another already oft-repeated invitation: when would we finally visit the camp at Matta? But this time Father said: "All right, I'll come in three weeks; in as many days as a man has fingers and toes, after that I'll be on my way." It was agreed upon and it happened, too.

From the village that could still be reached by boat there ran a path straight through the forest, to the point where the savannah started. It ran past pina palm trees and fragrant shrubs, over rotting tree-trunks and thick moss. It was cool there and dark, and one had to thread one's way carefully through thorn-covered trunks and exposed roots. Once in a while a snake would slither away, or one would just perceive a monkey fleeing; and there was always the slow noise of heavy, falling drops, but at wide intervals and in between the trees hung a heavy, muggy stillness. Nowhere was the smell of the earth and of growing things more pungent.

The light between the trees was toned down to gold by all the deep green, but gradually it became whiter, a diaphanous white, which indicated that the savannah was not far distant. The shrubs and the undergrowth became less dense; the palms became taller and no longer stood so close together. Soon one could see over the brush and perceived a plain of low and coarse grass that

became lighter and whiter towards the horizon, with here and there a solitary palm.

How can one describe the palm trees in this country! There are very small ones, with almost circular, edgy leaves, and others whose leaves hang down in streamers to the height of a man. There are magnificent, wavy palm trees under which one can take shelter from sun and rain, and there are dark palms, whose featherlike branches are laid upon graves as a gesture of farewell. And there are also the youthful, glad branches which welcomed a lonely king to Jerusalem, and small ones which Zacchaeus agitated in his boundless joy. There are the large heavy cocoa palms and the slender maurice palms, high and airy with a swinging top, the stately royal palm with its polished trunk, and the fruitladen obé palm compared to which even the proud date palm looks dwarfed. The palm trees are our ferns, the palms dominate our streets; under the fan palms sit the evening lovers in a corner of a garden, and in the crown of the royal palm hides the tiny little bird of God.

A palm tree grows up like a human being—and may a human being be as straight as a palm. They are the riches of the country: they give cocoanuts and their clear sap, oil and white meat from the tops, the fragrant obé and the brew of the koemboe, just as they nourish other peoples with dates, others again with pure sago and still others with sweet wine. Every palm tree is the story of the integrity of the country, and thus is the slender maurici—like a tall blade of grass it bends over the plain—the story of the utter loneliness of the savannah.

What wind has carried the small seed, when not a single plant was growing on the white, crumbly soil above which the whole air vibrates with heat? Were these palms here already when the first men of my people—they came from the cold dark mountains towards the west—beheld for the first time the openness, greater than that of the sea? Did they then already willingly bend their slender shadow over a crying woman and an ailing child?

Blessed palms, blessed palms, under which on a sad flight the saddest of all mothers rested, as well as the most languishing child. Does not your blessing sway any longer over the people who fled past your trunks—driven by what fate?—into the open gateways of a city, behind the fences of the houses, a city made up of houses in which the old folk had to perish . . .

Still my palms stretch their frizzy tops towards the metal sky and the glowing disk which indicates the days and eradicated them on this empty stage.

And as to ourselves. . . . How small and lonely we wander through the savannah. The grass disappears too. And now comes the bare, glassy sand which glows purely white in the strong, stinging sun. The palms have disappeared. Openly, endlessly the burning plain stretches out. Nowhere is there shelter in this plain, which goes on in terrifying and lazy waves as a skin under the hot breath of the sun. The powerful rays hit the earth; the vibrating air above the burning plain frightens me.

As a small boy, I cried violently when I was for the first time on the savannah and saw, materially saw, what loneliness was. Air and land, and a man who had to find his way through all this to the secret behind the horizon. . . . Narrow, mortally narrow, the world closes in about one. The earth is a bowl, a tight shell from all sides, and the sky a shell above it. Inescapably we are enclosed in this tight space.

And fright would paralyze my small feet that ached from the hot earth, and my eyes burned from the hot light and the fearful staring, wondering whether that horizon would open upon a better region. But to the left, to the right, everywhere the same vacant emptiness. Then I thought, for the first time I thought: to stand there motionless and die there; then for the first time I felt the anxiety for my entire people— O courageous Caribbeans, all your spirits stood in battle array around me with clenched teeth, and I did not see it!—all your fear for this empty, vacuous plain, which is the lonely life, which we must follow, straight through until the last rim of the horizon. . . .

But did the father suddenly live again in the sun of the savannah more strongly than ever? Without a word he set me upon his shoulder and carried me for hours to the camp. I felt his springy, strong gait under my shaking body; and his daring, his strength, no, all the old strength of my people, O brave Caribbeans, I sucked in; a swelling fruit of an old twig . . . It was Christopher in the sea of sand when Christ's name had barely reverberated in the white light of the savannah. He brought me back to the people to whom I belonged; may once his name as a watchword on my paling lips make a stranger recognizable among my forefathers, when I once enter upon the eternal hunting grounds, carried along by an immortal instinct. . . .

Captain George met us and, a man of few words as usual, he invited us to his tent which had been prepared for visitors, or really for the true children of his tribe, who were always irresistibly drawn back to the savannah. The camp was situated at

the edge of the wood, where the savannah ended and where at a few minutes' distance the quiet brook lost itself amidst the trees.

The camp was decimated. There were about twenty huts, pitched tents, covered with the entwined leaves of the pina. Most of them came as slanted roofs down to the soil and had an opening in front. In George's hut, as in the others, there were few household effects; three hammocks, a few benches, arrows in the corner and a few baskets in which must have been all the worldly goods of the chief.

In former days, oh indeed, in former days! Always when I visit the camp I must think of the glorious former days. And I think that it is so with every man of the tribe; but who dares to think about it aloud? Who still dares to evoke the picture of the time when a mighty chief led thousands to new forests and new hunting grounds, to ever new and open savannahs where strange animals still fled through the high grass, animals whose name only exists now in old legends. . . .

Sitting on their haunches around the camp fire, does not every one see in the slender white smoke the play of the warriors, does not everyone hear the whirring of an arrow? Expressing himself slowly, mysteriously, the sage explains the nature of the world: I am one, every object is one. Seeing outside myself originates duality; and from duality comes life.

Oh, the wise men of the land do not write any books, but their pronouncements are deep enough to meditate upon forever. Little knots in a rope are the signs and symbols of their wisdom, better and deeper of meaning than corrupting words. Around the lonely campfire at the edge of the savannah sit the last males of the old tribe, the ancient people of golden masks, who built tall temples on the shores of an unknown sea. The ancient people that, despoiling itself, was hospitable to the wanton Spanish conquistadores and to a man who was a leader in Christ's name. A people who were hunted down. . . . But I promised not to blame you. . . .

Around the campfire there is no longer anyone who utters evil words. Everybody lives in the most profound loneliness and is seeking for an old way. Everybody is crouched to an old, old sorrow, which slowly emerges and then submerges again like a serpent with the playing of its master's flute.

A youthful hunter sits next to me, staring into the flames. His thoughts seek a way amidst the undulating, burning wood. Slowly his mouth opens, and his thoughts suddenly take the form of this hymn:

"On the heights of life I have climbed to sing this song for you, because you do not come nearer over the pale year-long paths; not yet. . . . Therefore I call to you; come to me out of your rosy tents, O fowler. I call you from land to land, come then, my impalpable friend. You live in the twilight of eyes, you know a song and pipe it so sweetly. . . . You are a desire; an abyss between the embraced Loved One and myself. . . . O Death, do not wait for the incompleteness of every smile and the unfulfilled day. To the mountain, whence I can tell you, the Satan of Beauty has seduced me. . . . Come then, O flame, O fire . . . Here it is that the wood will burn, one with you, one with the inextinguishable fire. Does the eternal flame of death burn deep in the earth?"

The young hunter thinks of death as a welcome danger. He knows himself to be a tiger on the hunting grounds of a strange Orpheus and looks around watchfully for his prey. He sings in a soft, almost inaudible voice, and the melody is barely perceptible; it is almost a tune, hesitating, slow and dreamlike. . . . The song itself does not know where it has vanished, and, suddenly aware of the silence, you know that this group of humanity is lost, perhaps lost forever in the endless plain. Motionless (but also silently), they all sob, these brave hunters, who know of the town of houses like a narrow prison, and the women who know the city like a strange and fearful fairy tale, beckoning, but who still feel this earth, the gray, obscure savannah closer to their bodies. Immersed in thought the young hunter looks up at the large star. . . .

Then I listened to the story of the great father of the tribe, how every father of a strong tribe leaves his small children behind and moves himself to a further region. Homage, homage to the father of my tribe! Okamé felt with his fat little hand the smooth trunk of the goyave before he fastened his hammock to it. How his hand trembled as he tied the knot; six times he had to strike the tinder before the dry wood caught fire. When, however, the smoke rose in heavy clouds it drove the nocturnal animals into the woods, and he climbed calmly into his hammock and as he lay down waited for nightfall.

Okamé was already old, very old to be the chief of an Indian tribe; more than sixty years ago he had become captain, and his son had succeeded him and his son's son, who had now become a Christian and also was named Captain George. But Okamé did not want to think about all those things right now. For several days quite a different thought had occupied his mind. And it was

really an ancient thought, one with which he was quite familiar, but now it occurred again to him with renewed force. Now the boys prepared to break camp and to wander further, much further up north, where there would be trading of wood and skins for knives and shotguns. Okamé had an aversion to all this, but he could keep quiet about it, because he had lived so many days, days of much greater danger, of exhaustion and hunger and strife. Did he not know now that he was near the end of his days and that soon now he would close his eyes for good? . . . His spirit would mount the ghost of a horse, and he would ride away to the eternal fields. With childish, blissful anticipation he waited for this, as for a feast. In the evening, in the circle of the council he had told all the men that he would remain behind, to die alone in his hammock, so that his spirit might depart undisturbed to the better regions. Silently they nodded their approval, and George his grandchild, who had too weak a heart to be a captain of the Caribbeans, had tried in vain that morning to drag him along. He remained behind all by himself to die, as everyone should die who does not die in battle; all alone, all alone.

It had become very quiet on the savannah, as Okamé peered over his toes at the horizon. The sun that had disappeared behind the horizon colored the sky above the savannah with a faint red, which suddenly melted into carmine. Okamé looked steadily in that direction. A large bird flew along the even cloudless sky. The light on the earth became vague with shadows, the white sand of the savannah attained a violet hue. No breeze disturbed the pointed leaves of the arrawé palms, which loomed large against the far heavens. The smoke of the early evening hour rose hazy and motionless. The thick, wrinkled hand of Okamé played with the wooden tassels of his hammock.

From the fire the smell of freshly running blood was wafted towards him. It caused a pricking sensation in his head, and for a moment he became excited. He clenched his fist, then he felt tremblingly for the quiver at his side. But his arm fell lifelessly. And the smoke now smelt like the blossoming branch of an oleander. A butterfly flew along his cheek and brushed his sleek white hair. Thus the Great Spirit approaches us, like Okamé. He is all powerful, we only behold him in the shape of a minute animal. Okamé knew that his life had been righteous, as must be the life of a great warrior who can be wise in council and conciliatory in the shadow of the tents. All lines smoothed out on his old face.

He kept his eye steadily on the horizon, as if he were looking for a new way. The carmine dissolved into violet and spilt out over the horizon. How is it that suddenly, as night falls by degrees, the sandy savannah becomes covered with young green grass? Okamé already saw the first star as a silver decoration on an endless carpet. All this was on the other side of the smoke. At this side the savannah had become a creek. Whence the water came he did not know, but for one who has lived so many days there is no longer any wonder.

Okamé wanted to rise in his canoe, but he saw how calmly and safely the stream took him along peaceful shores; he leaned back again, and through his half-closed eyelids he saw many stars appear, large, like lighted cocoanuts suspended in a gigantic cluster and others playful and agitated like a myriad glowworms all around and above the canoe. He saw them reflected in the water.

From the forest came soft noises, far, far away. It was the trembling growling of a baboon, and above it, a choir of birdsong, delicate and high. The sickle moon was like a golden horn, on which an invisible man blew muffled, deep tunes, which trembled against Okamé's chest. The music came in detached small scales from his heart, but the boat took him further and further in a strange cadence. Okamé shut his eyes and no longer saw anything; but he felt as if he were shot forward like an arrow from a bow. . . .

Now Okamé stood leaning against his strong, white horse. It was trembling on its legs, while Okamé counted the arrows in his quiver. Then he jumped astride, the horse's mane fluttered in the wind as flags in the sunshine, and high up his dark head flew along the light sky. Okamé whistled shrilly, drew his bow, and the arrow shot away over the green plain, carried by wide white wings. He laughed uproariously and his horse stopped next to the dying tiger. To the depth of an arm his arrow stuck in the yellow spotted neck. So the days passed and the nights had become days.

In the morning a gray stork on its tall legs stood staring at the body of Okamé. The fire had gone out; only a few sparks remained, and the sun came out across the savannah. A striped serpent crawled near. It was beady-eyed and slung itself around the goyave tree, pointing its split tongue towards the stony face of Okamé. The sun made his body look shrivelled and bony. But his spirit was aloft; with dizzy speed and boundless joy his spirit wandered over the Eternal Hunting Grounds.

During the day it is even more quiet in the camp than at night

when the fires are lit. But when the feasts begin all gestures are faster and everyone dresses up with multicolored ornaments and red feathers. Crouched around an empty boat the members enjoyed their peace drink. They all spit a finely chewed root into the empty boat; this brew is covered with palm leaves and from it comes a white fermented potion which goes to the head and drives away all sorrow. Tapana is the ancient peace drink, which is passed from mouth to mouth and is kept in a whitely polished calabash; the drink through which are exchanged all the life ferments of guests and tribe members alike, so that there will be peace and no treason. It is the symbol of the ancient communion of this small congregation, because is not the loneliness of this soil, even the open savannah, a dark catacomb? With a solemn expression on his face George passed around the tapana to his guests, and Father drinks, I drink. . . . This gulp coursed burning through my throat, my chest, my entrails, and through my arms and legs. I jumped up and shouted: "Ohé, ohé, let's dance as of old!" This drink had kindled my bloodstream.

And George had passed the cigars, rolled from mabo bark; what a prickly aroma was wafted towards one from the intensely blue smoke. Slowly and seriously the captain inhaled this smoke. He held his hand in front of his mouth and the mabo bark between his fingers; with a deep draught he absorbed its burning life. Then it was my father's turn. But they skipped me because I was not yet a man, but George smiled encouragingly at me, his strong yellow face breaking into fine wrinkles.

Many more times the tapana was passed around, so that all faces shone with serene happiness. Then, when the afternoon was gone and coolness spread over the land, the dances and festivities of manhood began.

Great is the wisdom of a dying people; it gives its thought to the deepest things, because it knows that its task will soon be achieved, and the last man, "O terror, am I the last of my people?", must answer the question: Why has this tribe lived and has the sorrow been carried from child to child? And it is the last ones especially who think all this over, because they have been left by themselves and led into a lonely plain; there they can reflect.

The sage of this tribe says: man is born to sorrow and to bear his sorrow in solitude. Therefore we will prepare a feast, O those among you who have attained manhood and wish to be accepted in the ancient circle of warriors, who want to draw a bow and plant your life in a woman's body! therefore we will prepare a

feast, so that we may judge your courage and see that you are no longer children and no longer complain as if you were a sick woman. That no pain can be so great that it makes you cry out in anguish, because physical pain is small compared to what you will suffer from loneliness. Dance then so that you may think through the intoxication caused by the divine rhythm.

The kettle-drums and the flutes drown out all thought; the rhythmic song of the women lures the dancers out of their tents. One by one they come to the captain, who hangs the Koenana, the significant symbol of life, around their necks. It is made of woven reed ornamented with colored bird feathers; but between the rushes vicious wasps are fastened, with the back part of their bodies turned inside. And the dancers are hung with this kind of living ornament. High sounds the song of the women, higher go the flames of the fires; the music grows faster, the dancers pipe a shrill tune and the rhythm makes them bob up and down, it throws them against the earth and lifts them high in the sky. The smoke curls fantastically around the dancers in slender columns. New ones arrive, clad in long woolen tassels, and with arrows fastened to their backs and arms. A high headgear made of blue and green feathers flutters above them. "Ohé, ohé!" the children shout, and with the swinging of their arms the spectators urge them on to the dance and the music until it becomes a savage whirl.

Then the bearers of the wasps step out one by one from the ruddy circle. Their faces are pale, not a muscle twitches in pain. Indifferently they allow themselves to be rubbed with herbs and oil by the old women. Now a circle of warriors is formed around another fire, and the youngest hunter makes room for his new brothers. In this circle they will learn the secret words of their tribe for evenings on end, the real names of every tribe member and the totems of every family.

Presently, when everybody has returned to their own tent, he will find his new weapons, a thicker bow and heavier arrows; the new warrior then considers which girl of the tribe he prefers, and how long he will have to work to buy a rifle, like those of the captain and the city dwellers. . . . They are already estranged . . . already different; there remains only the wisdom of a dying people and the lessons of its last sage; life is born from duality. Will a new life spring from this dying people?

You, who are reading this, remember the soul of the very righteous Fray Bartholomé Las Casas who, his whole life long,

fought the injustice of the conquerors. Through prayer and offerings, through words, deeds and writing he asked for mercy for the defenseless victims of the white man's hunger for land. His voice sounded as that of one possessed and, still misunderstood after centuries, his name is barely remembered among the last children of the exterminated race.

You, who think about peace and ask about man's injustice towards his fellow man, remember him, because wherever your path may lead in these lands, his name will be your watchword, the only magic word that will unlock their hearts for you.

The day after the feast everything is again serene and quiet at the camp. The men go out early, hunting or fishing in the forest creek between the winding, exposed roots. Sometimes they pursue a fleet fish in their canoe and shoot him with an arrow which floats above the water; the loose point sticks in the back of the fish and is attached to the drifting shaft with a piece of string. Thus the fish betrays itself.

At other times they build dams in the forest creeks and throw small pieces of nekoe reed into it, and after a few hours all the fishes float to the top, paralyzed. In the woods they set traps for the deer, then lianas are attached to the rifles; in the water they lay large fish traps made of wariembo rushes. No animal is shrewd enough to escape from the triangular arrow of the Indian; and he kills birds with a small arrow ending in a heavy head. He spits on the soil to catch snakes, because he has potions and powders that paralyze all reptiles and make snake-bites as harmless as a scratch.

When all men have left the camp, the women have already toiled for a long time. Some sit at looms and make hammocks from the filaments of wood agave or palm rope and ornament the borders with woolly fringes. They also make small pieces of cloth from raw cotton and weave lovely figures into these, as lovely as women's dreams can be. . . . Others again sit on their haunches moulding slender crocks from gray loam, sometimes too they make crude lizards and crocodiles from it. This material is baked dry and colored with red sap. And these crocks give to the water the pure taste of the soil and the fresh aroma that is the rose oil of my country. Some women cultivate the soil, others go to look for the eggs of turtles and leguanas. But the children patiently keep a watchful eye on the traps set in the nearby wood to catch the swift robin redbreasts.

Few words are heard during the daytime in the camp: only the

wind which rustles through the leaves, and the mother who calls her young ones home with a long shout. In the furthest interior they live undisturbed in their own loneliness. The elders are tolerant of the recklessness of the young huntsmen; the boys listen with respect to the words of the elders and their impatience subsides at the campfire. In smiling humility the women drift through the stillness; the children stare out of large black eyes at the ever changing wonders of life. The beautiful wonder which always renews itself in all hearts, but with what anguish. . . .

Gradually they all became Christians; they settled at the bend of the river, far away from the savannah. They built a church there for the missionary, who visited them every month for a few days.

And as the tribe has proceeded, further, yet still closer to the end, then the rainy season comes finally over the land, the short season wherein everything blooms anew. In the innermost part of the country life begins anew. The savannah is empty, and in a few years at not a single edge of the wood will there be any longer the ancient tribe's campfire.

The soil becomes moist, all the trees in the forest drip, large brown drops; long tears of resin ooze from some trees, and the forest exudes a somber chill, which makes one sleepy and feverish. The toads stretch themselves croaking out of the swamps; the bitterns paddle dully through the wet leaves. The sun disappears for days, the sky becomes dark gray, and the low clouds drift by in a haze. On every branch a foolish bird calls, tarata, once every minute. A little bird of God flutters by frightened, in the distance a chirp responds. Then nothing; it becomes dead still.

But now a soft buzzing is heard from far away, like a distant wagon over a hard road, which gradually comes nearer and nearer. The rain rushes over the forest, swishes through the trees. Thousands of leaves and twigs fall, but before the rain starts there is the buzzing of swarms of insects. The wood is a pond, the rain streams along the thick trunks and drifts along to the mountains, to the savannah. A bolt of lightning strikes straight down the plain and divides the land in two. The thunder subdues to a weak rumbling in this endless space. But nothing is any longer to be seen, for the rain falls in thick, gray curtains.

Hide yourself, hide yourself then, because this is the time that my country expels all intruders, to be empty and bring new life

to everything, to plants, to beasts, to human beings! Especially human beings. The sky mixes with the earth, the water with the soil; strange fires are lit, where heaven and earth meet. Chaos rolls all into one, and then again water and sky, land and sea, disentangle themselves.

And suddenly the rain has stopped, a ray of sunshine has swept it all away, and the greedy soil absorbs all the new sap. The forest still drips, but the drops fall slowly, as a taut memory. The tiger comes out of his hiding place and peers now to the right, and now to the left. The bird starts calling again with a sad cooing, first soft, then louder and louder.

But the savannah remains empty. . . .

The bird flies away over the many forests and settles on a new tree, near a small village on the river, a new hamlet with a church. Once more he calls; then silence. . . . I have heard him . . . he called the name of a people, an ancient people, which was the loneliest of all, because it died out in a short period of time, and only its name remained. All the birds call its name from the furthest interior on the country.

Come back.

Translated by ALFRED VAN AMEYDEN VAN DUYM

J. van Melle

REVENGE

BEFORE THE THREE YEARS' WAR, UNCLE BEREND VIVIERS, A TRANSvaal farmer, had a tenant farmer named Strydom. In the course of the war Strydom was captured, with a few other members of the commando, and he was persuaded by the English to join them. He helped them in all sorts of ways; led them where he knew the road, provided them with useful information; and he was often present where they burnt down houses and carted the women and children off to the camps. He was also present when this happened to the house and family of Uncle Berend. There was nobody at the house then except Uncle Berend's wife, their little daughter Susarie, and Andries, a boy of fifteen. The boy refused to be taken prisoner and, while the soldiers were busy searching the house, he raced away on one of the English horses. Strydom then fired upon him and shot him dead.

Uncle Berend was a religious man and, from the day he received news of this, he wrestled with the question of whether it was right for him to hate Strydom for that act or whether it was demanded of him to forgive in his heart the man who had murdered his child. Thoughts about this continually tortured him, until finally he found a certain calmness in the conclusion that one must forgive one's fellow-man everything if he comes and asks for forgiveness, but that if he does not do so, if he shows no remorse over his act, one is not called upon to forgive him.

Thus it was that, when peace came, he hoped that he would not meet Strydom again, that Strydom would never come and ask for forgiveness, so that he might keep cherishing his hatred against the man.

It was a Sunday afternoon, about a year after peace. Instead of the big house which they had before, there was now a much smaller one. The living-room was much smaller too. Everything spoke of diminished prosperity, even if it was not really poverty. The furniture consisted of cheap cases and chairs in the place of the firm and attractive Boer furniture of former days. The walls were not papered but simply plastered, and on the floor there was, true, a carpet, but the floor itself was earthen. Uncle Berend, still drowsy from the afternoon nap which he had just enjoyed, came in: a powerfully built man of medium height with graying hair but red beard. His small blue eyes were as keen as steel. His face was burnt red, contrasting sharply with his white forehead. A courageous face, which would almost have been noble had it not been for the nose, which was too small and coarse in shape. He carried his hat in his hand, and as he sat down he placed this on the ground next to him. He yawned once or twice and then stood up lazily to reach for the newspaper lying on the table. He read with little interest. After a little while his wife came in, Aunt Hannie, a typical farmer's wife of good family, a woman cultivated without being soft, who could appreciate luxuries and had also learned to suffer deprivations. She still looked bright and spirited, although her black hair was almost gray; in her gray eyes there was a serious, almost sad, expression. She sat down at the table, and with her hand to her face she pensively stared outside. They did not speak.

After a little while she said: "Shall we presently go to the graves?"

"That is good," he said.

A little girl of about fifteen, bearing a strong resemblance to Aunt Hannie, came in with coffee and Boer biscuits.

"Oh, you have already made the coffee, Susarie; you are quick," said her mother.

A youth of twenty or twenty-two years of age entered also; he paused and said: "I am riding over for a while, Father, to Vyefontein, to Uncle John's."

"Yes."

"I may be back a little late."

"Yes, it is well; give them all our greetings."

Martiens went out and the two old people again sat silently together. Susarie, who had gone out, returned. "May I go over to Katrina, Mother? I shall be back at five o'clock."

"Very well," said Aunt Hannie.

Susarie prepared to go, but it appeared that she was hesitating about saying something. Uncle Berend and Aunt Hannie looked at her questioningly.

"Father, Kaatjie says Mina says that Uncle Willem has seen Strydom in the village. Uncle Willem says he is looking dreadful. Uncle Willem says he pretended not to see him, but he says Strydom slunk by like a dog afraid of a kick." Uncle Berend said nothing, but Aunt Hannie said: "I do hope we shall not run across that wretched dog. What should he be doing in the village now? I am surprised that he dares to come here where everyone knows him."

"It is good, eh, Father, that he looks so?" said Susarie. "He is suffering, says Uncle Willem, one can see that in him. That is good, eh, Father? The more he suffers the better, eh?"

"The worst for him is still not bad enough," said Aunt Hannie.

"No, wife, no, after all we are Christians; let us not execrate. Let the Lord judge; let the Lord punish, but let us, if it is possible for us, remain quiet."

His wife made no answer, but her face and her whole attitude spoke of vindictiveness.

"Then I'm going now, Mother."

For a while neither said anything. Finally Aunt Hannie said: "What should that beast of a man be doing here? If I met him, I don't know what I should do; I'd be capable of doing something dreadful."

"Yes, if one followed the dictates of one's heart." Then they sank deeply into thought again.

"Shall we leave now?" asked Aunt Hannie.

"Good, we shall go now." But he remained sitting, and Aunt Hannie too; she had lost herself again in bitter thoughts.

A native appeared in the doorway. He stood hesitating as if he were afraid to talk.

"What is it, Kameel?" asked Uncle Berend.

"Baas, here comes Baas Strydom."

Aunt Hannie jumped up from her chair. "What?" she asked angrily. "Where?" Uncle Berend, with his two hands pressing upon the arms of his chair, slowly rose to his feet. He looked at Kameel furiously. "What are you saying?"

"Yes, Baas," said Kameel, afraid of the anger his words had created and at the same time, also angry with Strydom who had dared to come there. "Yes, Baas, it is he that is coming there, Baas Strydom, Baas." He waited a few minutes and then left. Uncle Berend peered through the window. Aunt Hannie hastily came to his side and so for a few moments they stared silently at the approaching man. It was clearly he. They knew him too well to make a mistake; because Strydom, their former tenant farmer, the "Joiner," was the man who had shot their child dead. He rode his horse at a walking pace, straight for the house, not looking about him, but staring straight in front of him. Near the house he dismounted, and tethered his horse to the branch of a tree. Then he approached slowly. His attitude was depressed. He was a tall, muscular and still young man, but his walk and his attitude were so downcast that, from afar, one would take him for an old man.

"It is he," said Uncle Berend. Aunt Hannie turned round and walked through the room, her fist at her mouth. She cried with rage. Uncle Berend also turned away from the window and stood with his clenched hands pressed together, his head bowed. There was a soft, hesitating knock at the door. Uncle Berend opened it. In the doorway stood Strydom in a dejected attitude. Uncle Berend stepped a pace backward, and Aunt Hannie blazed with hostility.

"You here?" asked Uncle Berend angrily. "What are you doing here? How dare you come here?"

Strydom took his hat off and spoke in a soft voice, very humbly. "Uncle Berend must chase me away from Uncle's porch, if Uncle Berend wishes; I have only come because I cannot do otherwise; because I want to ask Uncle Berend and Aunt Hannie for forgiveness and then Uncle Berend can do what Uncle Berend wishes."

Uncle Berend hesitated. What ought he to do? But, after all, it was quite clear; he knew well what he should do. He had long

since decided within himself that if Strydom should come to ask forgiveness then he could not refuse it. Therefore, he said, though it was with distaste: "Come in."

"What?" cried Aunt Hannie, astounded and angry, but he took no heed and stood aside to let Strydom enter.

"Just as Uncle Berend wishes," he said as he slowly came in. "I have only come to ask your forgiveness."

"Sit down, then," said Uncle Berend roughly. Strydom sat down, in a bent attitude, a picture of dejection. Then, after a few moments of silence, he started to speak. He spoke in a low, almost monotonous tone. "I came to ask Uncle Berend and Aunt Hannie for forgiveness for the great evil which I have done on this farm. I have not come to make excuses for myself, I have come only to ask for forgiveness. My conscience plagues me; my heart is always sore; I am as one who has no faith left in anything. Life is a torture to me because the memory of my misdeed is with me day and night. I want only Uncle and Aunt's forgiveness. I ask no more. I do not wish to be in Uncle Berend's and Aunt Hannie's sight more than I can help, but I ask if Uncle Berend and Aunt Hannie can forgive me."

"Do you know that you are asking us something that is almost impossible?" said Uncle Berend more calmly.

"I know, Uncle," said Strydom humbly. "It is impossible, but I had to come and ask. We are all human beings, Uncle, and each in his time requires forgiveness."

Uncle Berend sat down. Then he said with emotion in his voice: "Cousin Pieter, God's Word says: If your brother sins against you, and he says he feels remorse, then you shall forgive him. That I will try and do although I do not know whether I shall be able to, whether it will indeed be possible for me, because the grief you have caused us is so bitter and your deed so cowardly that it is almost impossible for flesh and blood to forgive it. However, God is judge and His is the vengeance, but we must forgive. I want to try if I can. More I cannot say."

Strydom stood up. "Thank you, Uncle." For a few moments he remained standing there on the floor as if he was turning over in his mind whether he should say anything else. Then he turned slowly towards the door. In a humble and depressed voice but, at the same time, with gratitude in his tone he took his leave. "Good day, Uncle Berend; good day, Aunt Hannie."

"Good day, Cousin Pieter," said Uncle Berend, though with distaste, but Aunt Hannie did not answer his greeting. Strydom went out and himself closed the door behind him.

When he had gone Aunt Hannie said angrily: "I cannot forgive the murderer of my child." Then she asked accusingly: "How is it possible, Berend, that you allow this man into your house? He does not deserve that any person on earth speaks to him. He is the lowest human there is." She started to cry. "Oh, when I think of the day when he shot our dear Andries dead, and that he now dares to come into our house." She dropped her head on her arms and began weeping aloud. Uncle Berend went to her and placed his hand on her shoulder.

"It is hard to be a Christian, Hannie, but this man comes to ask forgiveness and we may not spurn him. The Bible teaches us that so emphatically that I have not the courage to refuse him forgiveness." Aunt Hannie stood up and dried her tears. She went to the window and stood there looking out.

"Since we have been married we have done our Christian duty," he continued. "Our home has always been a home where the Lord has been served, and do not let us stop now. Let us, however hard it may be, try to forgive this man."

"He will come and ask for work again; I am sure of it," she said.

"I hope not. I hope that the Lord will spare me this trial. But if the Lord demand it of me, then I shall do it."

Not more than ten minutes away from them lived Gert, their eldest son, on the portion of the farm that would one day be his; a quiet man who worked hard during the week and stayed at home on Sundays to rest. His wife Koba was different; she liked company. That afternoon she said: "Won't you walk across with me? You need not come, if you do not wish," she continued when she saw him hesitating. "If you would rather stay here, I'll go over by myself."

"If it is all the same to you, then I think I will stay," he said. "I am feeling rather too lazy to walk."

"Anna," she called to the servant-girl, "come, I'd like you to walk across with me."

Along the road they met Susarie with a little maid with her.

"Do you think Katrina and the others are at home, Sister?" asked Susarie.

"I think so, Susarie, we did not see them driving away. Were you going there?"

"Yes."

"Are your father and mother at home?"

"Yes, Sister."

"Were they perhaps not driving somewhere?"

"No, I don't think so. But perhaps they are going to the graves. Father and Mother often do that on Sunday afternoons when there are no visitors."

"Do you know, Sister, that Uncle Willem has seen Strydom in the village."

"Strydom? What should he be seeking here? From whom did you hear it?"

"From the servant-girl, Kaatjie. She heard it from Mina."

"I do hope he will not be coming here."

"Oh no, Sister, he will never dare do that."

"One never knows," said Koba thoughtfully. "One never knows what a person will do or won't do."

"If he does, then something terrible will happen."

"Yes," sighed Koba, "I don't know what will happen then."

She was near Uncle Berend's house when she saw a man on horseback stopping at the house and walking towards the porch. She stopped in fright. "Strydom," she thought, and then she doubted it again. Hesitantly she walked on, afraid to go to the house. A servant-girl hastily came to meet her, half-terrified, half-excited. "Missie," she said as one glad to have something exceptional to say and, at the same time, indignant: "Missie, Baas Strydom is here. Baas Berend allowed him into the house."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Missie, I know him well. It is he, Baas Strydom, who shot the little master Andries dead."

Koba said nothing, wondering greatly. "How on earth is such a thing possible?" she thought. She walked to where, from behind a hedge, she could see the front of the house and there she waited until she saw Strydom coming out and riding away again. Then she approached the house. All this time she had expected something or other to happen, loud voices charged with accusation, or a fight perhaps; she feared that she would hear shots. But nothing happened; Strydom had come out and ridden away after a while as if no great tragedy had taken place within.

"I cannot understand it," she said, "I cannot understand it," and she walked to the house and went in. Uncle Berend and Aunt Hannie were sitting in silence in the living-room in an agitated and, at the same time, melancholy attitude.

"Good afternoon, Mother; good afternoon, Father," she said, and immediately afterwards: "Was Strydom here?"

"Yes, he was here," said Aunt Hannie.

"And so?" asked Koba.

"He came to ask forgiveness," said her mother-in-law bitterly.

"And what did Father say? Did Father let him come in?"

"Yes, Koba," said Uncle Berend dejectedly. "What would you do? The man came to ask forgiveness; as a Christian, one cannot do otherwise."

"This is going too far, Father," said Koba indignantly. "I would have driven him off like a dog. And I don't think he is honest about it either. He is such a low beast. He will just say so in order to come and live here again."

"That is what I say, too," said Aunt Hannie.

"I do hope he will not come and ask for a place again," said Uncle Berend in a weary tone. "Because it would be the greatest trial of my life to see the murderer of my child before me every day."

"Where is Martiens?" asked Koba.

"He has gone to Vyefontein," said Aunt Hannie.

"I wonder what he will say there," said Koba.

Susarie came in. "Katrina was not there," she said, "and so I just turned back again." She paused suddenly, looked from one to the other, became aware of their gloom. Then she went up to her mother. "Did Mother go to the graves?" she asked.

"No, my child, we did not go to the graves."

"But Mother has been crying. Why did you cry, Mother?"

"I was sad, Susarie. We were talking of little brother, who is dead."

Susarie placed her cheek against her mother's. "Mother will surely never forget our little brother. But Mother must just think that little brother is in heaven, not so, Father?"

"Yes, my child, I certainly think so," he said.

Susarie kissed her mother on her forehead and went out. After an interval of silence Aunt Hannie said: "I wonder what Andries would say of this if he knew?"

"If he is in heaven now, I know well what he would say," said Uncle Berend.

When Koba reached home and told it all to Gert, he said: "I can understand that of Father. With him, his faith goes before everything else."

"But everything has a limit, Gert."

"Everything has a limit, but each one must decide for himself where that limit is. For me the limit may perhaps lie here; for Father, the limit lies much further away. But perhaps it was a good thing that I or Martiens was not there."

"What would you have done?"

"I don't know. You never know what you would do in such a case. But if one day I should meet Strydom and shoot or strike him dead, then I would not call it murder."

"In any event he will probably never come here again," she said to reassure herself.

There were many joiners (traitors) at the place Strydom had moved to after the war. The man who gave him a place to live in was also a joiner. He had learnt to know this man during the war and this man had told him that he could come and stay with him after the war if he wished. This man had also heard of the shooting of the son of the very man with whom Strydom had been staying, but this did not affect his intention of taking Strydom on his farm. He knew he would get on well with Strydom, a hard worker, as he had learnt, and an honest man to boot; besides they shared the same political feelings and that helped a lot towards getting on well together in times such as these. He had never revealed to Strydom that he knew anything about the shooting of the boy. And he never spoke to anybody about it, yet, by some means or other, the matter became known in their neighbourhood. The joiners, in fact, associated only with other joiners, because other people avoided them as far as possible. So in the first years after the war Strydom and his wife were very much thrown together and sought among each other the necessary company and friendship. But when Strydom had lived in the neighbourhood for a little while, the attitude of the people with whom they associated underwent a sudden change. The visits of neighbours and of acquaintances, few in any case, came practically to a stop. Even when they mingled with the others, in houses, or at celebrations or at the church, they felt that there was something about them the people did not like. They were always being left alone. When they addressed an acquaintance, he was in a hurry to be on his way and had little to say. When they joined a group talking together the circle immediately diminished until they were alone again. When one of them entered a room full of people, the conversation stopped and everybody regarded them curiously.

For Strydom this was nothing strange; he realized that the crime he had committed there on Uncle Berend's farm had leaked out in this neighbourhood, but his wife knew nothing of it, did not even know that he was present when the people were taken from the farm to the concentration camp.

"What possesses these people?" she asked in despair one day.

"They avoid us as though we were lepers. And just see how strangely they look at us."

"You imagine it," he said.

"No, I am not imagining it. No, good heavens, Pieter, I am beginning to hate the people here. What have they against us? They do not come to visit us and when you go anywhere they avoid you. Are we then so contemptible because we are tenant farmers, because we are poor?"

"But there are other tenant farmers among us."

"That is what I say too. But they are not always left alone as we are."

"Perhaps they are, too. Perhaps they are only more thick-skinned."

So far as he was concerned, it was of no consequence. He did not hanker after visiting places to seek pleasure and company. He would rather not go anywhere nor visit anybody. For her sake, he now and then drove somewhere for diversion, but even this he did not desire. It was of little concern to him that people avoided him. He knew why it was. Could one blame them? Could you blame anyone because he did not wish to associate with such a low fellow? No, he did not hate them for this. But he preferred not to meet them. If now and again he forgot about the affair then there was probably somebody who by his attitude, by his look alone reminded him of it. It was better for him to see nobody except the people of the farm. They were accustomed to him. They knew everything but had surely almost forgotten it again. With them he could associate without being reminded of the shooting of Andries.

The affair tortured him a good deal. Some days it seemed as if he would go mad. There were days when he would not speak a word, when he would see nobody, when he fled from his wife and his house. For hours at a time he just sat. If then, unexpectedly, she asked him what he was sitting and thinking about, he started. Then he mentioned something about the farming and she believed it. She was also getting used to it that he was so taciturn. She accommodated herself to it although it was no pleasant thing. She had her two children and this helped a good deal to pass the time. She chatted to them and played with them. To the future she gave no thought. She thought no further than the day itself. But sometimes she longed for the old farm and for Aunt Hannie and the others; but she supposed that they would not want a joiner on their farm; it was no use even thinking about it.

One day Strydom said to her that it would be necessary to go to Uncle Berend to fix up certain things. There were perhaps still some cattle of his, and possibly sheep. He had also buried a little money there and a few other things. Perhaps these were all still there. One could not dispose of all these things by letter, one had to go in person. He had always been afraid to go but the people in general were quieting down; the hatred against those who had joined was no longer so strong. He would not stay away long; at the most a few days.

When he came back he was for a while more cheerful. He spoke again and there were no more days when he avoided her altogether.

"How were they all at Uncle Berend's?"

"Friendly," he said, "not at all antagonistic."

"I am so glad," she said. "And the goods we buried there, with the little money?"

"Gone."

"Oh, what a pity."

"And the few head of stock?"

"The English took them."

Then she asked: "Do you think they would have you there again if you asked?" But he shook his head: "That we must not attempt," he said. "They will not do it." When later she again mentioned the matter, he answered discouragingly. Then for hours he did not speak again. The little spell of cheerfulness which he brought with him from his visit to Uncle Berend's passed and his silence and taciturnity and his need to be alone gradually got a grip on him again. He was never unpleasant or easily angered, but so very morose. She could not understand that he still retained his health in the circumstances. She assumed that it was the war that oppressed him; the hatred and the contempt of the people, his mental torture that he had betrayed his people. He never spoke about the war; he avoided it completely. She only hoped that time would heal it all.

It was about six months after the visit to Uncle Berend that a letter arrived from Strydom. Uncle Berend was sitting alone in the living room, resting, when Martiens came in with the mail. Uncle Berend looked at the letter and then gave it to Martiens. "Please read the letter for me," he said, "I have not got my glasses here at the moment."

Martiens tore the envelope open, looked through the letter, but said nothing.

"Who is it from?" asked Uncle Berend.

"It is Strydom writing, Father."

"From Strydom?"

"Yes, Father. He asks if he can come and live here again."

"What?" said Uncle Berend, rising angrily. But he at once controlled himself and sat down again. Then he said: "Read what he is writing." Martiens read. He read haltingly, with short pauses, as if he did not grasp everything immediately, but it was only due to his internal anger and agitation:

"Dear Uncle Berend,

"By God's grace, it is still well with us, and we hope we may hear the same from Uncle. Uncle, I want to ask if Uncle will again give me a place. We would like again to come and live with Uncle. Not that it is not well here with us, because we have not got a bad place here, Uncle, but I am longing to be back at our old dwellingplace. On Uncle's farm I had the happiest years of my life, and on Uncle's farm I committed my greatest sin. That is the place where I fell so deeply. I am longing to go back there, Uncle. Uncle may find this strange, but that is just how it is, Uncle. The place where I fell, Uncle, will, I hope, be the place where I shall arise again. My thoughts are strange, Uncle, but I imagine that God will forgive me my sin the sooner there where I committed the sin than here. If Uncle Berend has truly forgiven me, then I want to ask Uncle please to give me a place again. Please, Uncle. Uncle can give me just what Uncle wishes. I shall be satisfied with what Uncle thinks is good. Perhaps the Lord will so dispose that I may still sometime be able to do something good for Uncle Berend. I do not ask it because of poverty, Uncle, but only because my thoughts are always turning back to Uncle Berend and the others and to the old farm.

"I close my letter now, Uncle. If Uncle Berend does not see his way clear, then it is also good, Uncle. I can understand it.

"Marya knows of nothing, Uncle. I shall still tell her, but so far I have not had the courage. She is the only person who still thinks something of me, and what will she say if she knows everything?

"With greetings from myself and Marya,

Pieter Strydom."

There was a long silence. "Father will surely not let him come here again?" asked Martiens.

"I don't know, Martiens, I first want to speak with your Mother. This man is fighting for his soul, I feel it." Martiens was angrily silent. "Please see where your Mother is."

Martiens went out and Uncle Berend walked to and fro in the

room. A little while later Aunt Hannie came in, furious and excited.

"Did a letter come from Strydom?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Uncle Berend as he sat down.

"What does he write?" she asked. She took up the letter lying on the table and read it. Then she angrily flung the letter on the table. "That he should still dare think that we will give him a place again." Uncle Berend remained silent.

"You are surely not thinking of taking him again?" asked Aunt Hannie uneasily.

"I do not know myself yet, Hannie," he said despondently. He stood up again and walked backwards and forwards. "I have no wish to, Hannie, but it almost seems to me as if we must. It is as if the Lord wishes it of us. It is as if the Lord would test us in this way. Why should this man now insist in coming back here? It is really strange. And if the Lord tells me I must, yes, then we must, however bitter it might be. It seems to me that this man is seeking. He is seeking relief. It is a man who feels remorse and who cannot find rest. Now he seeks it here, here with us. If it is the Lord who sends him, is it then for me to spurn him?"

"It may also be the Devil urging him on."

"No, Hannie, I do not believe it. This man is praying, that I can see. He is suffering. He is being sorely tried."

"And now he comes to us to help him, to those who hate him."

"Yes, it seems so inexplicable. And yet it is perhaps only human."

"But you are not going to give him a place again, Berend. I do not wish to see this low beast again every day."

"I do not wish it either, wife," replied Uncle Berend, reflectively. "It will be just as hard for me; but I am afraid to go against the will of the Lord."

"The Lord cannot wish it."

"The Word says if we do not forgive then the Lord will not forgive us either."

"You can forgive him if you wish, but you can refuse to give him a place to live in."

"You now wish to travel two roads at the same time; you want to forgive and yet not to forgive. You know that if we forgive him in our hearts then we shall also allow him to come back. We must not run away from the truth. If we face the matter honestly, then it is like this: We keep nursing thoughts of revenge and we do not wish to see him again, not to help him in his soul struggle, or we forgive him and then we forgive him out and out."

Aunt Hannie spoke up angrily: "I cannot understand how you can talk like this, Berend; how for one moment you can think of having him back with you here."

"I am speaking against my own feelings. I only do not want to deceive myself; I am placing the matter open and above board. Thus it is now. It is dreadful to have to do it but yet, it seems to me, this is God's command."

"And then, what about the children? They will be furious."

"This thing is between you and me, Hannie. The children have very much less to do with it. How they will treat him is their affair. This thing is between you and me."

"We shall see this man every day," she wept.

"I do not think we shall see much of him. He will want to keep to himself. His house is not near us either, and he will seldom show himself here, of that I am convinced."

"As if you knew him, now."

"I also know what it is to suffer. The hardest is when you feel remorse for your deed. In any case, we need not immediately come to a decision."

Uncle Berend stood up. He lingered as if he wished to say more and then went out. Aunt Hannie went to sit at the table with her head on her hands. Martiens came in.

"Mother," said Martiens.

"Yes, Martiens?" asked Aunt Hannie dully.

"I heard what Mother was talking about with Father." Aunt Hannie remained silent, she waited for him to continue. Martiens put his arms out aggressively. "Mother, please do not let Father allow that man to come back here again. I hate him so dreadfully; and so do we all. I would be capable of shooting him dead."

"Yes, child, I understand. I feel it even more than you all do. But if your father wishes it, then we must. He is your father, Martiens. And your father believes it is his Christian duty. We must not prevent him from doing what he believes is his duty. He believes that the Lord expects it of him. We must not do anything that would burden his soul."

Martiens was silent. Aunt Hannie began to cry. "Oh, but it is dreadful to think of it. How shall I endure it?"

•

On Vyefontein there dwelt a man by the name of Uncle Jannie. He was an old friend of Uncle Berend's, already an old man, of wise disposition. When he heard that Strydom had been at Uncle Berend's and that Uncle Berend had forgiven him, he said: "Yes, that I can believe of Berend. He is like that. Everything for his

Christian religion. But I wonder how he feels deep in his heart." When afterwards he heard that Strydom would get his old place back again as Uncle Berend's tenant farmer, the old man disapproved. "Some people want to be more Christian than is possible for a normal human being," he said. "It will never do. Berend wants to do it now, but I do not believe for a moment that his heart is in it. He is doing it because he thinks he must do it, but within himself he will rebel against it. I know him well. He is very proud, this old friend of mine. He believes that he is more of a Christian than other people. He imagines now that he can do this big thing, a joiner, your old tenant and one who deliberately shot your son, to forgive him, and to give him a place on your farm, next to you where you saw him every day! Good heavens, he will no more be able to do it than I could do it. I must ride over there and try and persuade him to change his mind." But Uncle Jannie was no man of prompt action and while he was still planning to go and talk to Uncle Berend about the matter he heard that Strydom had already moved in.

"Now we shall just have to wait and see how things go," he thought.

One day after Strydom had been there for a little while, he rode over. He saw at once that Uncle Berend was no longer the same man. It was some time since they had last met each other and Uncle Jannie could at once see a difference. It was as if a suppressed rage smouldered in his friend's eyes.

"Like a dangerous bull," he thought. After they had sat talking a while, Uncle Jannie asked: "How are you getting on with Strydom?" At these words Uncle Berend looked at him as if he thought: "Uncle Jannie, please keep yourself out of this. Concern yourself with your own affairs. This is my concern, and I am fighting it out and I do not want anyone else to interfere."

"Oh, so-so," he said brusquely. And there was a long silence.

"There is evil brewing here," thought Uncle Jannie. "There is evil brewing here. But every man must fight for himself. In matters like this, one man cannot help another. There are times when a man has to go through hell alone, and nobody is able to help him. Berend is now going through such a hell, I see it. What will come of it, nobody can say. But things are not looking too good to me."

In their small, poor but decent home Mrs. Strydom was engaged in all sorts of small tasks. She was now in the living-room.

A tall, dark woman, energetic by nature, but now weighed down under a deep depression. She was possibly thirty years old; not unattractive in appearance. It was raining and therefore the light in the room was gray and cold. There was nobody else in the house. All at once, sad and agitated, she started speaking aloud: "Now what is he doing outside in the rain?" She fluttered her hands as she spoke. She stood in front of the window and impatiently wiped off the moisture in order to see better. "There he is again, on the same spot. What is he seeking there? Always on the same spot. Look at him standing there now." She walked nervously through the room. "He is losing his mind. We must move away. We must move away from this place." She went into the kitchen and started working there. Strydom came in. He had on a long raincoat from which the water was dripping. Outside he first kicked the mud off his shoes and then hung the coat on a peg. With his hat on, he sat staring at the ground. Mrs. Strydom came out of the kitchen and looked at him questioningly.

"Where are the children?" asked Strydom.

"They are playing in the wagon-shed," she said. Strydom spoke in a dull voice as if what he had to say was of little importance. "It is really raining now. I wish it would stop so that we can go on with the work again, for one can do nothing; the yokes hurt the necks of the oxen too much. But it is necessary for us to start weeding, because the fields are really overgrown; the weeds are quite overtaking the corn. And I am so tired of doing nothing; I cannot sit the whole day. I want to work and be active. Sit still I cannot."

"I can see that," she said. "You scarcely sit for five minutes before you're off again. You walk in and out of the house apparently without knowing what to do."

"That is just so; I do not know how to pass the day with these continuous rains."

"But before the war it was not like this. You were then only too glad when it rained, in order to rest. We sat and talked the whole day and you didn't complain of boredom."

"Yes, then."

"Why cannot you be like that again, and sit and talk a little? Do you think this is pleasant for me? You come in and scarcely speak a word and when you do say something, you only express dissatisfaction. I sit the whole long day without being spoken to, for hardly anybody comes here, and when you come in and I think of talking a little, then you say nothing and you sit as if

you have a hatred against everything. And it is not long before you are off again, goodness only knows what to go and do. Before the war, you were never like that."

"Yes, before the war," he said morosely.

"I had longed so much to be in my house again with you and the children, and what have I now? Since we have been together again, I have never once seen a smile on your face."

"What is there to laugh about?" he asked angrily. "There is reason enough to curse, yes, or to cry, yes; but to laugh? Ah! and I am the one to laugh."

She asked hesitantly: "Is it because you joined?"

"I am always prepared to defend the fact that I joined the English. It was hopeless for us to continue fighting, it was just pure foolishness, and the sooner the war came to an end, the better. Had some of us not joined the English, then the war would only have lasted longer and the end would in any event have been the same. Only more people would have been killed, and many more women and children would have died in the camps. And you must certainly not hold that against me, for what would have become of you if they had sent me overseas with the rest of the prisoners of war? When I joined, I could provide for you and you had everything you needed. No, I do not reproach myself for it. I did it with open eyes. I would not do it a second time, that is very true; if I were faced with the decision again, I would not do it again, yet I did it with a certain purpose, with the thought that this was perhaps the best thing to do. But that other thing that happened here, for that I feel deep remorse. It is breaking me; it is draining my blood; it is smothering my soul. If I could undo it, I would let myself be shot ten times over. It is always with me. I cannot drag my thoughts away from it. Especially in such weather when we cannot work. I wished that I could drink myself to death or that the whole damned world would blow up."

"What do you mean, Pieter?" she asked in fright. "What is this other thing that you are talking about?"

"That I shot Andries dead."

"You shot Andries dead?" she screamed. "But, Pieter, what you are saying is surely not true. Of course, the English shot him dead, as you always told me. Pieter, Pieter, speak, man! Did you shoot Andries?"

"Yes," he said sombrely, "I never wanted to tell you. I was afraid you also would despise me like the others. But so it is. Not the English, but I, I," said he, and struck himself furiously

on the chest. "I committed this murder. Because it *was* murder. The cowardly murder of a child."

She made no answer and suddenly ran out of the house. She looked around agitatedly as if seeking a place whither she could fly, and then hurried away from the house to a poplar grove and entered it. There she burst out crying. She beat her fists against the branches, she struck her forehead against a tree trunk, she forced her pinafore into her mouth until she nearly choked, until finally she fell exhausted to the ground, her face in the rotting leaves. After a long time, she became calmer and stood up. She flicked the earth and the leaves from her clothes, wiped her face and found her way out through the thick undergrowth of young poplars. Strydom stood there waiting for her and silently they walked back to the house. She now felt a deadly weariness. After they had walked a little distance, she asked: "Oh, Pieter, how could you do it?" Despairingly, he answered her: "I do not know myself. Aunt Hannie first insulted me, and I was angry, and when the Tommies were shooting so badly, I wanted to show them how a Boer could shoot. The devil himself made me do it. As soon as I had fired the shot, I wanted to kill myself." Then they spoke no more. They entered the house, and Strydom sat on a chair, staring out over the veld. Marya stood about as if she wanted to do something but could not concentrate her thoughts on anything. Then she said: "But that is all past; nothing more can be done about it; try and get it out of your thoughts, and let us move away from here, far away from here, where nobody knows us, where you will never again see anything or anyone reminding you of this thing. Let us go to German West or to German East, or to the Mines, just anywhere you wish; but I want to get away from here. You are so peculiar, you are always walking to that spot. Sometimes you look so strange; you look so sad. I am becoming so frightened, and I have become so nervous. Oh, let us please move. I would go anywhere, even if I suffered poverty and privation, but I want to move from here; I want to get away from here as soon as possible."

"I don't know; I am attached to this farm."

"Attached to this farm?" she asked in utter amazement. There was a knock at the door and Strydom opened it. It was Uncle Berend.

"Come in, Uncle," said Strydom. "Sit down, Uncle." Uncle Berend sat down. He looked worried, and his thoughts were confused. He looked restless. He continually fidgeted on his chair; he was smoking, but his pipe kept going out. Strydom was calmer;

he spoke in a subdued voice, but without strain, and he showed no nervousness when there was a silence.

"The rain is really coming down now," said Uncle Berend.

"Yes, it is really raining a lot, Uncle."

"The fields are now so overgrown that you can scarcely see the corn," continued Uncle Berend.

"Yes, Uncle. I was just saying to Marya that I am longing to go into the fields to weed them, but that it is impossible while it rains like this."

"No, it is no use even thinking of it; the fields are too wet, but when the rain stops it only takes two days and then one can make a start."

"The corn will be swamped if this goes on," said Strydom.

"Part of it is already swamped. The corn is turning yellow."

"Yes, Uncle."

Mrs. Strydom had gone to the kitchen and returned with coffee. Uncle Berend and Strydom drank.

"The wind has veered somewhat," said Uncle Berend. "It is now almost due North. I expect this weather will now pass. You will see it clearing this afternoon. I should not be surprised if that is so. If it does not rain tomorrow, can you go to the mine to fetch coal? Then we can start weeding the day after tomorrow."

"Yes, Uncle; very well, Uncle. I shall warn the Kaffirs this afternoon that they must all be in readiness early the day after tomorrow."

"And your Communion dress, is that ready yet?" Uncle Berend asked Mrs. Strydom. His attitude was at once easier and more friendly.

"No, Uncle, I still have to make a start with it, but I am not sure whether I shall be making one; I don't really need a new one, and I am not sure that I want to go to church."

"No? Why not?"

"One does not always feel like driving to church, Uncle," she said casually. There was a silence.

"I think I shall be going again," said Uncle Berend.

"Uncle Berend is in a hurry," said Strydom.

"I want to ride to see the sheep; the poor things are having a bad time in this wet." Uncle Berend walked out but turned to Mrs. Strydom in the doorway. "I think I should have that dress made if I were you; you may still feel inclined to go." Mrs. Strydom did not answer and when Uncle Berend had gone she walked into the kitchen. Strydom was once more sitting in his former dejected attitude. Mrs. Strydom returned from the

kitchen. "I am quickly going to see what the children are doing," she said as she went out.

"That man is to be envied," spoke Strydom sullenly. He pointed to the door. He spoke with brief pauses. "He feels grief, but he has no struggle of the soul. He is still trying to forgive, even though he cannot. He is a Christian. But what am I? A cowardly murderer." He laid his head on his hands. Suddenly he rose impulsively. He spoke loudly. "But I shall not move. I want to stay here and always think of my sins. I want these people and this place before my eyes, day after day, and thus punish myself till the day of my death." Agitatedly he walked to and fro. "Here I wish to be tortured by always seeing the place where I shot this poor boy. Some day God will take pity on me and take me away from here. But I do not want to go of my own accord. Some day the Lord will say: 'This man has suffered enough; it is sufficient; take him away there.' But I shall await my time. I shall not run away: I shall stay here and I shall endure my punishment till the end." He put on his coat again. Just then Mrs. Strydom came in.

"Are you off again?" she asked.

"Yes, I am just going to see where the horses are grazing."

"But the food is nearly ready: can you not wait until we have eaten?"

"I shall be back presently." Mrs. Strydom sat down hopelessly and rested her head on her hand. "Oh, God, God." She covered her face in her hands and began weeping bitterly.

It was a few weeks later and Uncle Berend entered the dining room. He looked careworn: he was not so erect and he was thinner. He sat down with a sigh and rubbed his hand across his forehead. Then he jerked his head as if he wanted to shake something off, a dreamy vacancy of mind that worried him. Then he remained without moving for a while, with his head backwards, as if he was sleeping with his eyes open. For a long time he sat thus. Then it was as if he suddenly awoke. He rubbed his forehead again and spoke aloud: "What is the matter with me these days? Just as if there is a great emptiness here!" He stood up and shook his fist: "The thing is working on my nerves." Again he started pacing to and fro. "If only he would go away of his own accord."

Aunt Hannie came in and sat down. Uncle Berend also sat down and tried to act normally. He filled his pipe while Aunt Hannie sat looking at him anxiously.

"You must give Strydom his marching orders," she said. "I do not want him here any longer. It is driving you crazy and me too. My nerves are giving in; I cannot endure it any more. Tell him he must move and then we shall have peace again."

"It is easy for you to talk about it," he said. "It is not so simple. I can send the man away, but what then? Will that dispose of the matter? Did I not tell him that he could live here and can I now send him away without breaking my word? Did I not relinquish revenge as an offering to God, and can I now take it back? Can I rob the Lord? Vengeance is the Lord's.

"God loved Andries more than you or I and therefore His the vengeance," he said in a quivering voice. "It is the Lord's right. He shall punish this man. He is punishing him now. Do you not see that He is already punishing him?"

"But if you tell him he must move, then that is surely not taking revenge. You do not want him with you, that is all, that does not mean that you are taking revenge."

"Yes, and yet it is so. If I send him away it is like saying: Man, I am still hating you all this time, even though I said that I want to forgive you. You are the murderer of my child and therefore I am chasing you away; I can no longer endure you before my eyes—and in this way I would take back everything I first gave." There was a silence.

"It is hard, bitterly hard," he continued. "Never in my life have I suffered so; but it will pass. Leave it in the hands of the Lord. He will in His time dispose of it."

"This is a trial, I feel it. To me it is as if the Lord thinks: I shall see if this man will be faithful and obedient."

Aunt Hannie sighed, stood up and went away. Uncle Berend remained immersed in his thoughts, and gradually the staring, vacant expression returned to his face and the tautness to his attitude. Suddenly he rose. He walked through the room, then stopped to look outside for a while, motionless as a statue. He spoke: "What is he always seeking at that spot? The worst of it all is that the fellow always goes and stands where Andries was shot. Now he is pretending that he is looking for his horse when he knows very well that his horse is up on the hill."

Angrily he shook his fist. "If it was still war, then I would shoot him dead on the spot." After a while he turned away and sat down, but after a few moments he stood up again and walked hesitantly through the room; then he turned to the wall where the rifle was hanging. He remained standing there. He moved

like one in a dull fog. He took the rifle from the wall and stood with it in his hands for a while, then went to the window and stood there motionless. He saw Strydom moving off again. After a few minutes he turned away and laid the rifle on the table. Then he slowly went outside. A few moments later Aunt Hannie came in, and immediately saw the rifle lying there. She looked around and picked up the rifle.

"What is this rifle doing on the table?" she asked herself. She replaced it on the wall. She sat down at the table, her head on her hand. Koba came in. "Father is looking very poorly these days," she said after a few moments.

"And it is no wonder," answered Aunt Hannie. "Who can endure it. This thing is preying on him and on me. But your father will not listen to reason. I have so often spoken to him, but he will not listen to me. I tell him: Let this man move away or otherwise give me a dwelling-place on one of our other properties, but let us not continually meet him. But he will not listen. It has now become a matter of conscience with him. Oh, Koba, you do not know how I am suffering. May the Lord cause this man to go away."

"Father looks so preoccupied these days. One can see that he is suffering deeply. I just met Father here outside the gate. I said: Good morning, Father, but he did not even answer me. It was almost as if Father did not see me. I doubt whether Father heard that I said good morning to him."

"I am getting so anxious about him," said Aunt Hannie. "I am so afraid that one of these days something terrible is going to happen." She leaned over to Koba and whispered anxiously: "You know, Koba, your father does not always know any more what he is doing. There are moments when he acts as though he were in a dream."

Koba commiseratingly shook her head but said nothing. Aunt Hannie pressed her clenched hand to her mouth and gave a half suppressed sob.

"I do not know what to do. He will not listen to me."

Outside they heard Uncle Berend's step. He came in slowly and remained standing near the door.

"I am going to lie down for a while, Hannie, I do not feel quite well. Perhaps it will pass over if I rest a little."

"Did you take the rifle from the wall, Berend? When I came in the rifle was lying on the table."

"No," he answered, feebly astonished. "No, I did not take the rifle down—not that I can remember." He stood waiting for a

few moments, but Aunt Hannie said no more and he slowly turned away.

"Don't you want your powders?" asked Aunt Hannie.

"No, thank you, wife, I am not really ill; only tired, very tired."

"I wonder, then, who took the rifle down?" Martiens entered the room. "Have you been in this room, Martiens?" asked Aunt Hannie.

"No, Mother, I have just returned from seeing to the sheep."

"Martiens, we must tell Strydom that he must move away from here," she said passionately. "You must tell him. Your Father need not know about it. Tell him it is best for him to move away. Speak nicely to him. And I shall pay him. Tell him I'd rather he left here. Tell him you feel that it is the best thing to do, but don't say Father wants him to move. He will understand. In some ways he is, after all, also a human being."

"Yes, Mother."

"You must make him understand that we want your father to think that he went of his own accord, do you hear, Martiens. Your father must never find out that we have done this."

"Yes, Mother, I shall explain it to him."

"It is dreadful to have to do a thing behind your father's back, but we cannot do otherwise. This affair is driving your father to exhaustion. I had thought that it would be harder for me than for him, but now I see it is affecting him far more than it does me."

"Yes, Mother, I can see that too."

"Martiens, we must wait no longer. Please speak today. I shall not rest before I know that he will be leaving here shortly."

"Yes, Mother."

"Do you know, Martiens," she said half hesitantly, "I am afraid that your father will still be driven crazy by this. Sometimes he is so strange, so absent-minded, sometimes not himself at all"

"Oh, no, Mother, now you are exaggerating, Mother."

"I tell you, Martiens, it is serious."

"Very well, Mother, I shall speak to Strydom, this very day. If I do not happen to come across him, I shall go to his house."

"I do hope he will move," said Aunt Hannie.

"If he won't, Mother, then I shall make him understand that he must," said Martiens decidedly.

"No, I think he will understand, Mother," said Koba.

"Oh, yes, he will," said Martiens. "It is not pleasant for him

here either. Everyone avoids him. It is only Father who sometimes visits him."

"Then things will right themselves again," said Aunt Hannie, relieved. "As soon as he has gone away again."

Without saying another word, Martiens went outside.

"Where is Susarie?" asked Koba.

"She is sitting in the small room working on her dress. I would rather not have gone to church, but your father wishes it. I don't know whether Strydom will be going. I do not see my way clear to sitting with that man at one Communion table. But Berend will. One cannot talk sensibly to him about it, Koba. In this matter he is so obstinate. He says we must drain the cup of bitterness to its very dregs. But perhaps Strydom will not drive to church. Marya has said that she has no wish to go. And if they do go, he will perhaps not go to the Communion table. Perhaps he will have enough good feeling not to do that—but one never knows. One does not know what that man is capable of. In any case, Martiens will now talk to him."

"Yes, Mother, perhaps everything will still come right. I am going to see Susarie for a while."

Martiens first walked to the house of his brother Gert, but he was busy ploughing in the fields. Then Martiens walked across to the fields.

When Gert saw him, he ploughed to the end of the strip and then waited to hear what his brother wished of him.

"May I see you a moment?" asked Martiens, and Gert walked a short distance with him so that the driver and the leader could not hear what they were saying. "We must try and get Strydom away from here as quickly as possible," said Martiens.

"I see that too," said Gert, "but how?"

"Mother wants me to talk to the wretch."

"Yes? And what will Father say about it?"

"Father must not know about it."

"But he will not hide it from Father. If Father asks him why he is trekking then he will, of course, say what you have told him."

"We must ask him not to do that."

"We? Do you want me to go with you."

"Yes, Brother. You must come with me. I fear for myself. If I must talk to the man about these things then I do not know whether I shall be able to control myself. If we two are together, then the one can control the other."

"That is true," said Gert.

"What are you going to tell him?" he then asked.

"I simply want to tell him the truth, tell him that Father's thoughts are dwelling too much on those old things and that he is losing his health."

"And if he does not want to?"

"Then," said Martiens with suppressed fury in his voice, "then I shall tell him that his life is in danger here, that he must clear off or else I shall kill him."

"We must only take care that we do not kill him there on the spot," said Gert.

"Are you coming with me?"

"Immediately?"

"Yes, the sooner the better."

"Unhook and let the oxen graze," Gert instructed the Kaffirs and together they walked to Strydom's house. They spoke no word along the way, each gripped in a maelstrom of thoughts.

When they arrived at the house Strydom was not there. With fear on her face, his wife awaited them at the door. Neither of them had ever been there and now that they were both approaching, silent and ominous, now that she knew what a dreadful thing had taken place here, she feared new evil. Her face was pale. She awaited what was coming.

"Is your husband here?" asked Martiens.

"No, he is not here."

"Where is he?"

"I do not know. He has not been away long, but he did not say where he was going." The two brothers looked at each other questioningly, irresolute.

"Do you want to come in?"

"We will wait outside," said Gert. She looked at them for a few minutes in silence and then went inside. Martiens and Gert walked away a little distance from the house and sat down to wait for Strydom.

After twenty minutes there was the crack of a rifle shot. Startled, they rose to their feet.

"It sounded to me as if it came from Father's house," said Gert. It did happen sometimes that somebody fired a weapon, perhaps at a hawk, or when they killed a pig or an ox, but now this shot startled them. They saw a servant girl standing transfixed at the homestead as if she had also taken fright, and some distance from the house, near the blue-gum trees, was a Kaffir hastily approaching a spot.

All at once Martiens started running towards the house, while Gert hurriedly walked after him.

Half an hour after Martiens had left, Uncle Berend had again entered the living room.

He sat down on a chair in a corner of the room in a bent attitude. Then he looked through the window. He jerked as if he would get up, but remained sitting again, leaning backwards. First there came a vicious and then gradually an absent expression on his face. "Yes?"

He got up and stood next to the table. Then he went to the wall, where the rifle was hanging. His attitude was peculiar. It was evident that he did not quite know what he was doing. His movements were slow and irresolute. Suddenly he raised his head and listened intently. He spoke hastily: "What is that? Common shots, the English are here! I must quickly saddle my horse!" He moved to the window, put his head out and called aloud: "Wildebees, Wildebees, fetch the horses and saddle up quickly. Hurry, the English will soon be here." He withdrew his head and again stood for a few minutes staring out. A tremor ran over him. He pointed with his hand at something outside and mumbled, then put his head through the window again and shouted: "Wildebees, wait, there is something I must put right first." He stood as if thinking. "What is it that I must do first? O, yes." He went up to the wall and took the rifle. He knelt at the window and took aim. His movements were now hurried, almost furious. The rifle cracked.

He stood up and replaced the rifle. For a few minutes he stood again as if thinking. He spoke half aloud: "Is everything all right now? Yes, everything is now in order." He went out and immediately afterwards Susarie came in. She was surprised to see that there was nobody in the room. She looked at the rifle. Aunt Hannie also came in, frightened, deathly pale, and trembling. She also looked at the rifle, and spoke with a note of relief in her voice: "O—who fired? Do you know?" she asked Susarie.

"I don't know, Mother; I thought it was Father who fired the shot."

"Your father had gone to sleep."

"I heard Father getting up. Perhaps Father was simply firing at something through the window."

"What would your father be firing at?" asked Aunt Hannie doubtfully.

"At a hawk, perhaps, Mother." Just then Martiens also entered the room.

"Who fired a little while ago?" he asked.

"We thought it was here in the room," said Aunt Hannie.

"Here, in this room, Mother?"

"Yes, so it sounded, but there was nobody here. I got a terrible fright. Susarie, please go and see where your father is."

Martiens went to the window and looked out. "What is that?" he asked anxiously.

Aunt Hannie came to his side. "What are they doing there?" For a while they stood looking. "I shall quickly go and see," said Martiens. Aunt Hannie wanted to go with them, but changed her mind and returned to the window. Susarie rushed in, terrified: "Oh, Mother, Strydom has been shot dead."

Aunt Hannie turned deathly pale, and almost collapsed, but then she sank into a chair. "What are you saying?" she asked.

"Strydom has been shot dead, Mother. He is lying there at the fence," said Susarie, more softly.

"Who shot him dead?"

"I don't know, Mother, but he is lying there near the big bluegum tree at the same spot where little brother fell. Geelbooi found him there. He says the bullet has gone through his heart. Who could have shot him, Mother? How could the accident have happened? Mother, how pale you are, shall I fetch you a little water?"

Susarie hastily went to the kitchen and Aunt Hannie walked to the wall, took down the rifle and looked at the breech. The safety catch was not on. She plucked open the slot and an empty cartridge case fell on the ground. The rifle slid out of her hands and in despair she struck her hand against her forehead. "Berend shot him. It's Berend! It is Berend!" she wailed hopelessly. She sank into a chair; with her head in her hands, she rocked to and fro in distress. Susarie came in with a cup of water. "Oh, Mammie, Mammie," she screamed in fright and knelt next to her mother.

"Susarie, it was your father. I knew it; it was bound to happen. We had waited too long to do anything. If Martiens had had time to talk to Strydom then everything might perhaps have come right. I was just one day too late. Oh, Berend, oh, oh!" She stood up, staggering, and walked out, anxiously followed by Susarie. Martiens entered the room. He picked up the rifle and the cartridge case and looked through the window. He replaced the rifle and put the cartridge case in his pocket. His movements

were hurried, like one trying to hide something. Then he suddenly stood still. He clenched his fists, his face shadowed with grief and hatred. "The swine," he said furiously. For a few moments he stood thinking, anger and doubt in his attitude.

Uncle Jannie rode over from Vyefontein to see Aunt Hannie. It had just become known that Uncle Berend had been acquitted and he was now riding over to congratulate her. It was possible that she was away from home and then his trip would be to no purpose, but he would take a chance. He had his youngest child with him, a boy of about twelve, because Uncle Jannie had married a second time and his wife was younger than he. The child had learned not to talk when his father was immersed in thought. Then in any event he received no answer, or answers which conveyed nothing. Uncle Jannie was thinking about the affair of Uncle Berend. It was something one did not readily stop thinking about. Not the court case, but the affair itself. That Uncle Berend would be acquitted was a foregone conclusion. It would have been an odd jury to have found him guilty. Everyone could surely see that the man had committed the act in a moment of insanity. But the deed itself? What was it that had forced him against his will to commit the act? It was quite clear. Hatred was always there, suppressed, it was true, but not conquered. It had to break out in some way or other, and then it happened thus. Thus it happened if a person attempted more than he could do. Then something gave way. It was as had happened with Saul and David. It was a precisely similar case. Hatred, suppressed hatred, that boiled up against one's will. A suppressed desire, but too strong to keep under. So he sat and mused, the same view which since then he had so often reached himself and had explained to others. . . . Saul wanted to kill David, but his sense of duty restrained him. But the desire to do so was too strong and, at times, maddened him and made it impossible for him to control himself; it caused him to be like one possessed.

When they arrived at Uncle Berend's house, Susarie let them in. "I shall tell Mother that you are here," she said. "Please take a seat meanwhile, Uncle." Oom Jannie and the boy looked about the room. They kept turning their heads to look at everything, but said nothing.

"That is where the rifle was hanging," whispered Uncle Jannie and pointed to the wall whence the rifle had been removed.

"Yes, Father."

"Through that window he fired the shot."

"Yes, Father," whispered the boy. At that moment Aunt Hannie came in.

"I have come to express my joy that cousin Berend has been acquitted," said Uncle Jannie.

"Thank you, Uncle."

"When do you expect him back?"

"We expect him back with the three-thirty train this afternoon. Martiens has gone to fetch his father in Pretoria."

"Yes."

"Go and see if the horses are still standing, my son." The boy went out and Uncle Jannie said: "We are all truly delighted that the decision was so favourable, but then nobody expected anything else."

"I, too, Uncle. From the outset I was convinced that the Lord would not impose on us even heavier trials. I did not doubt the outcome for a moment." There was a pause. Then Aunt Hannie said: "The statements of the two Kaffirs, Geelbooi and Kameel, helped a great deal. You see, Uncle, they heard him crying out that the English were coming and he had called for Wildebees who was his servant in the war and who has long been dead. Added to the other evidence the judge and the jury accepted this as proof that, at that moment, he was not quite in his right senses."

"Yes."

"A great help was, of course, also the statement of the doctor. He said it sometimes happened that a man who had always been normal momentarily quite lost his sanity." She looked at the door and said more softly: "He says it can happen like this: If a person has a great desire with which his thoughts are always busy and he suppresses that desire, then it is possible that that struggle will temporarily cloud his mind. And thus it was the case with Berend according to him."

Uncle Jannie became loquacious. "I understand. To me it seemed very much like the case of Saul. Saul also had such a struggle between his conscience and his desire to be rid of David."

Aunt Hannie nodded.

"To me the case is strikingly similar. Saul feared and hated in his heart, but he could not bring himself so far as to have David done to death, at least not at first. His sense of right restrained him. But then came times when the evil spirit was in him and at such moments desire got the upper hand and he twice attempted to stab David to death."

"Yes, Uncle."

"You see, Cousin Hannie, this, to my mind, was the case with Cousin Berend. He wanted to forgive Strydom, but could not. It was too difficult. He wanted to do something which not one of us could find it possible to do. It was superhuman. But he wanted to, because he felt that he must. There was, so to say, a continuous strife in him between these two desires, and it began to affect him and in the end it broke him. He had moments when he was out of his mind. He had thought: If I had come across this man in the war, then I would have shot him dead. And there was a moment when he believed that it really was war, and at that moment he saw Strydom. Then he had to shoot. It could be nothing else. I have thought a great deal about the matter."

"Yes, Uncle," said Aunt Hannie, somberly, "that is more or less what the doctor said."

"It was the Lord's will," said Uncle Jannie.

Aunt Hannie made no reply to this.

"We were really concerned about you, Cousin Hannie. Berend and I have always been friends. He was my old companion-in-arms. I am really grateful that he has been acquitted."

"Yes, Uncle."

"Now everything will come right again," said Uncle Jannie. "You must keep up your courage. Nobody will blame him for this deed. On the contrary we rather admire him. He had attempted to do what none of us would try to do."

"Yes, Uncle."

"Martiens went to fetch him, you say?"

"Yes, Uncle, I had wanted to go but Berend sent word that I should not come too."

"That is right, I think. It is better that you meet him here at home."

"Well, I think I shall go now," said Uncle Jannie. "I shall then rather come and visit Berend later."

"Yes, Uncle, perhaps that is better." Uncle Jannie stood up and said goodbye. "Good day, Cousin Hannie. May the Lord still be with you." He started to leave. Aunt Hannie accompanied him to the porch. She returned inside and sat down at the table in a depressed mood, at once nervous and agitated. She looked at the clock which showed a quarter of five. "They can be here presently," she said to herself. Susarie came in and sat down. They did not speak.

"Mother, I am afraid," said Susarie.

"Don't be afraid, my child. Your father is quite recovered

again. He was just confused for that little while. You need not be anxious at all. Your father will now again be just as he has always been. And, Susarie, don't give your father an inkling of your thoughts, do you hear."

"No, Mother, of course not," said Susarie decidedly and half impatiently. They sat in silence for a few more moments and then Susarie left again. Aunt Hannie went to stand before the window and looked out. She felt nervous and ill at ease. Suddenly she pressed her hand to her breast. "Here they are" She glanced sharply through the window and after a few moments went outside. A little later Uncle Berend came in, followed by Aunt Hannie, Martiens and Susarie. Uncle Berend walked slowly, less erect. He had become much greyer. His face was somber, yet at the same time solemn. He sat down in his chair. He looked around and his eyes kept turning to the window through which he had fired and then to the place where his rifle had been hanging. He sighed deeply. He spoke in a somewhat dull and lifeless tone, yet with much of the old strength in it. "And how are things here, Hannie?"

"Well, Berend. How are you feeling now?"

"So-so. Reasonably well."

"Go and pour coffee for your father," she said to Susarie. Aunt Hannie signalled with her eyes to Martiens, who got up and walked out. She stood up and drew a chair next to Uncle Berend. She stroked his hand lying on the arm of the chair. "I am so grateful that you are back, Berend," she said. "The Lord has helped us wonderfully."

"The Lord has helped me wonderfully. But the Lord has also caused me to go through deep waters, through great terrors." Aunt Hannie rested her head against his shoulder. She kept on stroking his big, strong hand. Every now and then she wiped her tears. "The Lord has caused me to see how small and insignificant man is," he proceeded, "of how little worth he is I had thought that I was a good Christian, that I could do much, that I could forgive as the Lord would have it. But I could not. My heart rebelled against it."

"It was too hard, Berend. It would have been too much for any man. No man with human feelings could have carried a thing like that. Please do not worry yourself about it any more. It is past. The Lord willed it thus. You could not do otherwise."

Uncle Berend rested his head on his hand, and gesticulated with the other: "I could help it. It was because of my sinful heart that this happened. But how deeply have I not fallen! I had said:

Vengeance is the Lord's. And yet I wanted to take revenge myself. Until eventually God said: Very well then, if you want to take back what you have given unto Me, then take it back. I took back my offering which I had brought to God. I have robbed His altar." He groaned.

"You could not help it," said Aunt Hannie, beseechingly. "You did not know what you were doing."

"Not at that moment. But the desire was always there. I had thirsted for this man's blood until the desire overcame me. I know that so well, better than the doctor knows it." There was a silence.

Susarie came in with coffee and a plate of rusks. She handed coffee to her father, who accepted it silently, and placed the plate of rusks on the table. And then she went outside. "Will you not eat anything?" asked Aunt Hannie.

"No." He drank. Aunt Hannie took the empty cup from his hand and placed it on the table. She sat down next to him on the arm of his chair and placed her cheek against his hair. "The Lord has forgiven you, Berend," she said. "Take new courage, my man. The Lord will help you again. He has forgiven you everything. Look how merciful the Lord has been in bringing you back home."

"Yes, the Lord is merciful—but I? Who am I . . ."

Aunt Hannie drew his head towards her, and her face worked spasmodically in the effort not to burst out weeping.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

GRESHOFF, J; born in Nieuw Helvoet, 1888.

Until the outbreak of the war he was co-editor of the literary monthly *Groot Nederland* (Great Netherlands). From 1927 to 1939 he lived in Brussels, from 1939 to 1942 in Cape Town, from 1942 to 1945 in New York; he recently returned to South Africa.

A poet and essayist, his principal poems are collected in *Verzamelde Gedichten* (Collected Poems) (1939); his prose is represented by *Rebuten* (Cullings), *In Alle Ernst* (In All Seriousness), *Steenen voor Brood* (Stones for Bread) and *Rariteiten* (Rarities). He also published four volumes of aphorisms: *Mimosa Pudica, Kalender Zonder Dagen* (Calendar Without Days), *Bitter-zoet* (Bitter-Sweet) and *Voor Volwassenen* (For Grown-ups).

LOOY, Jacobus van; born in Haarlem, 1855; died there in 1930.

Van Looy began his artistic career as a painter. While traveling in Italy, Spain, Tunisia, etc., he began to write sketches, which are collected in his volumes of prose I and II. For many years he belonged to the editorial staff of the literary monthly *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide).

He is one of the most typical authors of *De Beweging van Tachtig* (The Movement of the 1880's). He idolizes words, especially in his travel books; he is an epicurean and writes with imagination about the outward appearance of our every-day life. Not until later does he reveal an epic talent. There is something majestic, sometimes even overwhelming about van Looy. Moreover one finds in the short story, *De Dood van mijn Poes* (The Death of My Cat) and in his autobiography, *Jaapje* (Jimmy), a tender humanity and a gentle wisdom. As a painter van Looy also revealed himself to be a witty and dignified craftsman. Many of his paintings are to be found in Holland's leading museums.

Among his best literary works are: *Proza* (Prose), *Gekken* (Madmen), *Feesten* (Festivals), *De Wonderlijke Avonturen van Zebedeus* (The Strange Adventures of Zebedeus) (3 volumes), *Jaapje* (Jimmy) and *Jaap* (James).

VERWEY, Albert; born in Amsterdam, 1865; died in Noordwijk-aan-Zee, 1937.

In 1881 Verwey made the acquaintance of Willem Kloos, founder of the literary monthly *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide), who at first became his teacher; together they finally became the leaders of *De Beweging van Tachtig* (The Movement of the 1880's). He belonged to the editorial staff of *De Nieuwe Gids* from 1885 to 1890. Disputes of a literary nature caused his resignation and led to the founding of a new literary bi-monthly magazine *Tweemaandelijksch Tijdschrift* (Bi-monthly Magazine), later of *De Beweging* (The Movement). Verwey was the leader of a generation of young authors who—especially in his magazine *De Beweging*—opened and paved a new way.

Verwey was a poet and essayist. His first poems were written under English influence, but he eventually developed more individualistically and became a great poet and prose writer, craftsman and philosopher.

His most important work is *Verzamelde Gedichten* (Collected Poems) (2 volumes), Prose, Volume I to X. His three dramas in verse, of which *Cola Rienzi* is the best known, were inserted in the *Verzamelde Gedichten.*

ERENS, Frans; born in Schaesberg, 1857; died 1942.

This author of sketches and short stories belonged to the founders of the literary monthly *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide), in which he represented the Roman Catholic element. His best-known volumes of sketches are: *Dansen en Rhythmen* (Dances and Rhythms) and *Gangen en Wegen* (Alleys and Paths). He translated St. Augustine's *Belijdenissen* (Confessions) and Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatio Christi* into the Dutch language.

COUPERUS, Louis; born in The Hague, 1863; died in De Steeg, 1923.

Couperus never took part in any literary movement, although it is undeniable that he was influenced by *De Beweging van Tachtig* (The Movement of the 1880's). From his tenth to his fifteenth year he lived in the Dutch East Indies and then went back to the Netherlands. In 1893 he began to travel and lived in Italy and the South of France for many years. He also spent some time in Africa and Asia.

His first novel *Eline Vere* (1889) was widely read and appreciated; it is the story of a young girl of one of The Hague's decadent upper-class families and her life ends tragically. His works on all

subjects reveal two tendencies: a naturalistic realism; imagination and symbolism.

Of his many works the principal are: *Eline Vere, De Stille Kracht* (The Silent Strength), *De Boeken der Kleine Zielen* (The Books of the Little Souls), *De Dingen die Voorbijgaan* (The Things That Pass), *Komedianten* (Comedians) and *Het Zwevend Schaakbord* (The Floating Chessboard).

COENEN, Frans; born in Amsterdam, 1866; died there, 1936.

Coenen was one of the most interesting prose-writers to come to the fore immediately after the leaders of *De Beweging van Tachtig* (The Movement of the 1880's). He wrote several novels and volumes of short stories and toward the end of his life a more or less historical novel *Onpersoonlijke Herinneringen* (Impersonal Reminiscences) which rates among his best. Coenen was co-editor of the literary monthly *Groot Nederland* (Great Netherlands) until his death. His most significant works are his critical essays, not only about literature, but also dealing mockingly and ironically with politics and current topics. His *Studies van de Tachtiger Beweging* (Studies of the Movement of the 1880's) is of great and lasting significance.

HEYERMANS, Herman; born in Rotterdam, 1864; died in Zandvoort, 1924.

As a playwright Heyermans gained world fame. His plays generally revolve around some rebellious thought, wittily interpreted and with a more or less popular sense of humor. He obtained his greatest success with *Op Hoop van Zegen* (approximate translation: Let's Hope for the Best) which, however, from a literary point of view cannot be counted among his best works. For many years Heyermans wrote, under the pen-name of Samuel Falkland, short, often very sensitive, stories about the trifling events in the life of the "little man," which were widely read, especially in the period following their publication.

His principal plays are: *Ghetto, Op Hoop van Zegen* (Let's Hope for the Best), *De Meid* (The Servant), *De Wijze Kater* (The Wise Tomcat). Of his prose should be mentioned the 18-volume *Schetsen* (Sketches) and the novels *Droomkoninkje* (The Little Dream King) and *Vuurvlindertje* (The Little Firefly).

DEYSSEL, Lodewijk van (pen-name of Dr. K. J. L. Alberdingk Thijm); born in Amsterdam, 1864.

Van Deyssel is one of the leaders and principal spokesmen of

the literary monthly *De Nieuwe Gids* (The New Guide), of which he was a co-founder. He wrote a great number of essays on literature, dramatics and the art of painting, expressing his opinions in a, for those days, new and often ruthless manner. These were collected in *Verzamelde Opstellen* (Collected Compositions). As a piece of narrative prose, his novel *Een Liefde* (A Love) created quite a sensation and was branded "immoral" because of a few indelicate words and expressions. His love of detail is clearly demonstrated in his lyrical, aphoristic collection, *Uit Het Leven van Frank Rozelaar* (From the Life of Frank Rozelaar).

BUYSSE, Cyriel; born in Ghent, 1859; died 1932.

A well-to-do industrialist, Buysse was at the same time one of the most captivating Flemish novelists, co-founder of the Flemish periodical *Van Nu en Straks* (Of Present and Future) and later co-editor of the Dutch-Flemish literary monthly *Groot Nederland* (Great Netherlands), which he remained until his death. Buysse gives a very true and complete picture of the Flemish people as they live between the rivers Leie and Schelde.

The best-known among his numerous works are: *Het Leven van Rozeke van Dalen* (The Life of Rozeke van Dalen), *Het Ezelken* (The Little Donkey) and *De Tantes* (The Aunts).

TEIRLINCK, Herman; born in Brussels, 1879.

A Flemish author and co-editor from 1903 to 1907 of the Flemish monthly publication *Vlaanderen* (Flanders), the best examples of his beautiful, rather exact prose, are *Mijnheer Serjanszoon* (Mr. Serjanszoon) and *Zon* (Sun). His novel *Het Ivoren Aapje* (The Ivory Monkey) is excellent in detail but as a whole its structure lacks sufficient "backbone." After the First World War he devoted himself primarily to the stage revival. He wrote several plays, among which *De Vertraagde Film* (The Slow Motion Picture), *Ik Dien* (I Serve) and *De Ekster op de Galg* (The Magpie on the Gallows) are the best known.

Teirlinck is director of the Higher Institute for Arts and Crafts, and was formerly personal advisor to King Albert and King Leopold III.

STREUVELS, Stijn (pen-name of Frank Lateur); born in Kortrijk, 1871.

He was originally a baker at Avelghem; in his numerous novels and novelettes he describes especially the farmer's life in West

Flanders. He is more lyrical than his compatriot Buysse and is a master of the art of creating a particular atmosphere. *Minnehandel* (The Business of Love), *Langs de Wegen* (Along the Ways), *Dorpsgeheimen* (Village Secrets) and *De Vlaschaard* are among his greatest works, the last book being by many considered his best.

TOUSSAINT VAN BOELAERE, Fernand Victor; born in Anderlecht-Brussels, 1875.

This Flemish author attracts attention by his dignified and pure style and the peculiar manner in which he combines realism, imagination and character analysis.

His principal works are: *Landelijk Minnespel* (Rural Courting), *Turren* and *De Doode Die Zich Niet Verhing* (The Corpse That Did Not Hang Itself).

SCHENDEL, Arthur van; born in Batavia (N.E.I.), 1874.

Van Schendel's first work immediately assumed a special place in Netherlands literature because it was completely different from that of his contemporaries of the naturalistic school. In his youth he gained his greatest success with a short novel *Een Zwerver Verliefd* (A Wanderer in Love). In his stories he shows great preference for Italy where he has been living for many years. The early stories are about imaginary figures, incarnations of an elementary longing for love and wisdom in idealized, historic surroundings. In 1930 Van Schendel's talent revealed itself in another aspect with *Het Fregatschip 'Johanna Maria'* (The Frigate 'Johanna Maria').

His principal works are: *Een Zwerver Verliefd* (A Wanderer in Love), *De Berg van Droomen* (Mountain of Dreams), *Angiolino en de Lente* (Angiolino and the Spring), *Het Fregatschip 'Johanna Maria'* (The Frigate 'Johanna Maria'), *De Waterman* (The Waterman) and a trilogy, I. *Een Hollandsch Drama* (A House in Haarlem), II. *De Rijke Man* (The Wealthy Man), and III. *De Grauwe Vogels* (Grey Birds). I and III have been translated into English. During the occupation he wrote among other things *Mijnheer Oberon en Mevrouw* (Mr. Oberon and Mrs. Oberon).

HOLST, R. N. Roland; born in Amsterdam, 1868; died in Laren, 1938.

R. N. Roland Holst, first professor, later director of the Acad-

emy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam, was known primarily for his decorative art, murals and stained glass windows. He was also an excellent prose-writer with a particular style of his own. His two volumes of collected essays *Over Kunst en Kunstenaars* (About Art and Artists) I and II belong to the representative works of his time. His only purely literary work is a little volume of philosophical sketches, *Overpeinzingen van een Bramenzoeker* (Meditations of a Blackberry Picker). For several years R. N. Roland Holst was on the editorial staff of the monthly *De Gids.* (The Guide).

LEEUW, Aart van der; born in Delft, 1876; died in Voorburg, 1931.

Van der Leeuw wrote beautiful, quiet and tender poems and novelettes. His art drifts away from reality and is dreamy and poetical.

His principal prose works are: *Kinderland* (Children's Land), *Ik en Mijn Speelman* (I and My Fiddler) and *De Kleine Rudolf* (Little Rudolf).

MOERKERKEN, P. H. van; born 1877.

Van Moerkerken became known through his book *De Dans des Levens* (The Dance of Life). His best-known works include a series of ten novels under the collective title *Gedachten der Tijden* (Thoughts of the Times), in which he uses historical material and gives a true picture of certain periods or currents. He has also published poetry.

ECKEREN, Gerard van (pen-name of Maurits Esser); born in Haarlem, 1876.

For many years he was director of a large publishing firm. As an author he became known through a number of novels, most of which are considered to belong to the naturalistic school. Among his principal works of that period are *Ida Westerman* and *Annie Hada.* He later changed his style and wrote *Oogen In De Spiegel* (Eyes in the Mirror) and *De Parade Gaat Door* (The Parade Takes Place). As a contemplative critic van Eckeren has done excellent work, especially in *Den Gulden Winckel* (The Gilt Shop), a monthly for book-lovers which he edited, and later in the literary monthly *Groot Nederland* (Great Netherlands).

NAEFF, Top (Antonia Naeff-van Rhijn); born in Dordrecht, 1878.

Top Naeff gained her initial success with a book for adolescents,

Schooldyllen (School Idylls), which has been reprinted many times since its publication in 1900 and is still widely read. After this, followed novels, plays and several volumes of short stories. In the novelette and short story only a few Netherlands authors are her equals.

Her best-known books are: *De Dochter* (The Daughter), *Voor de Poort* (In Front of the Gate) and *Een Huis in de Rij* (One House in the Row).

VAN DE WOESTIJNE, Karel; born 1878 at Ghent; died 1929 at Zwijnaarde, near Ghent.

Van de Woestijne studied at the University of Ghent. He then lived at Latem and identified himself with the Latem School of Flemish artists. He was still very young when he began to write poetry; he contributed from time to time to the periodicals *Van Nu en Straks* and *Vlaanderen*. He was correspondent of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, for which he wrote a number of literary reviews. In 1921 he was appointed Professor in the Netherlands Literature at the University of Ghent. Van de Woestijne is considered one of the greatest Flemish poets. His work comprises critical essays and some romantic novels—mostly symbolic tales—and verse that is profoundly imaginative and subtle. Van de Woestijne has revealed a many-sided, complex personality, refined and high-strung, and an endless conflict between sensuality and the purely spiritual.

ELSSCHOT, Willem (pen-name of Alfons de Ridder); born in Antwerp, 1882.

After finishing his studies at the Trade School in his native town, Elsschot was employed for many years at Schiedam (South Holland). He then started a publicity agency in Antwerp. His first novel *Villa des Roses* (1913) immediately achieved a great success, greater in Holland, however, than in Belgium. His second novel *De Verlossing* (The Deliverance), appeared before the outbreak of the First World War; during the German occupation of Belgium his *Lijmen* (Glues) was published by a small, unknown publisher in Antwerp. Circumstances prevented this work from receiving much attention, a fact that discouraged Elsschot so much that from 1917 until 1932 he did not write at all. In 1933 *Kaas* (Cheese) appeared, and from then on *Tsjip* (1934), *Pensioen* (Pension) (1935), *Het Been* (The Leg) (a sequel of *Lijmen*) (1938), *De Leeuwentemmer* (The Lion Tamer). *Tsjip*

en de Leeuwentemmer (Tsjip and the Liontamer), a reprint, was published in 1943 by Querido Inc. in New York.

HOLST, A. Roland; born in Amsterdam, 1888.

Considered a poet of great importance in Netherlands literature during the period following the 1880's, his poems express a metaphysical longing, a desire to be detached from this earth, hovering between time and eternity. His prose is either philosophically contemplative or inspired by the Celtic mythical world.

His principal poetic works are: *Verzen* (Poems), *Voorbij de Wegen* (Beyond the Roads) and *De Wilde Kim* (The Wild Horizon). Prose: *Deirdre en de Zonen van Usnach* (Deirdre and the Sons of Usna) and *De Afspraak* (The Appointment).

COSTER, Dirk; born in Delft, 1887.

Coster gained great fame as an essayist and critic. In 1921 he founded, together with Just Havelaar, the literary monthly *De Stem* (The Voice), of which he became the managing director. His best-known book is *Marginalia,* a volume of aphorisms. Some time later appeared two critical essays *Verzameld Proza* (Collected Prose) which should be considered the most valuable contribution to the understanding of literary conceptions in our time. He has also published a drama with William the Silent as the principal figure.

HAVELAAR, Just; born in Rotterdam, 1880; died in Amersfoort, 1930.

Besides being a painter, Havelaar wrote essays on literature and the fine arts, expressing his opinion about arts and primarily in connection with religion, ethics and society. Together with Coster he founded the literary monthly *De Stem* (The Voice).

His chief works are: *De Religie der Ziel* (The Religion of the Soul), *De Nieuwe Mensch* (The New Man) and *De Weg tot de Werkelijkheid* (The Road to Reality).

HAAN, Jacob Israel de; born in Smilde, 1881; died in Jerusalem, 1924.

In Amsterdam de Haan was a well-known lawyer and private tutor. He first published some novels and many short stories but drew attention more particularly as a Jewish poet after publication of *Het Joodsche Lied* (The Jewish Song). As a Zionist, de Haan went to Palestine in 1919, where he became a lecturer at

the Government Law School. After having turned slowly but definitely away from Zionism, he was murdered in Jerusalem in 1924.

His principal works are: *Libertijnsche Liederen* (Libertine Songs), *Het Joodsche Lied* (The Jewish Song) and *Kwatrijnen* (Quatrains).

NIJHOFF, M.; born in The Hague, 1894.

Nijhoff studied law and, after receiving his doctor's degree, devoted himself to Netherlands philology and literature at Utrecht. He published lyrical and critical studies, showing a keen intellect in writing witty and sprightly speculative pieces. His lyrics are among the best of their kind that Netherlands literature has produced. In these he seems to cling to a happiness, past yet never completely disappeared, which is very typical of his work. For many years Nijhoff was co-editor of the leading monthly *De Gids* (The Guide).

His principal poetic works are: *De Wandelaar* (The Walker), *Pierrot aan de Lantaarn* (Pierrot at the Lantern), *Vormen* (Forms), *Nieuwe Gedichten* (New Poems); in prose: *De Pen op Papier* (The Pen on Paper), *Gedachten op Dinsdag* (Thoughts on Tuesday).

MARNIX GIJSEN (pen-name of J. A. Goris); born in Antwerp, 1899.

Goris studied at Leuven, where he was promoted to doctor in history in 1925. He was, successively, professor at that university, chief of the cabinet of the Mayor of Antwerp, director of Fine Arts of the municipality of Antwerp, chief of the cabinet of the Minister of Economic Affairs, High Commissar of Tourism in Belgium and finally director of the Belgian Information Bureau in New York.

After spending a few years as a young man in the United States, where he studied in Seattle among other places, he paid many visits to this country and in 1927 wrote *Ontdek Amerika* (Discover America). Goris' poetic work, collected in one volume *Het Huis* (The House), is small in quantity but great in value and significance.

During the Second World War, Goris published in New York *Belgium in Bondage* (L. B. Fischer, New York, 1943), written in the English language, and *Le Genie Flamand* (The Flemish Genius) (Editions du Roseau Pensant, New York, 1943), written in French. His anthology of Flemish lyric poetry appeared in Pretoria (South Africa) in 1944.

WALSCHAP, Gerard; born in Londerzeel, 1898.

This Flemish writer, first a journalist, later a library-inspector, is one of the most original and powerful authors in young Flemish literature. He deserves the great prestige he enjoys for his talent of keen observation, the courage with which he analyzes pathological cases in his direct, sober style.

His chief works are: *De Familie Roodhooft* (The Family Roodhooft), *Celibaat* (Celibacy), *Trouwen* (Marrying), *Sybille, Een Mensch Van Goeden Wil* (A Person of Good Will), *De Dood In Het Dorp* (Death in the Village) and *Het Volk* (The People).

ROELANTS, Maurice; born in Ghent, 1895.

This Flemish author began his literary career as a poet; he afterwards published a novel, *Komen en Gaan* (Coming and Going). His prose is moving because of a subtle, analytical and sensitive style. He later published: *De Jazzspeler* (The Jazz Player), *Het Leven dat Wij Droomden* (The Life We Dreamed), *Alles Komt Terecht* (All's Well That Ends Well) and *Gebed om een Goed Einde* (Prayer for a Good End).

BRULEZ, Raymond; born in 1895.

This author's important work is *Scheherezade*, a series of short stories. His writing is marked by its philosophical quality, as well as its cultural background, and "his delightful prose," says one critic, "is of an epicurean skepticism."

SLAUERHOFF, J. J.; born in Leeuwarden, 1898; died in Hilversum, 1936.

Slauerhoff studied medicine in Amsterdam and then made countless trips to China, South America and Africa as ship's surgeon. Slauerhoff published lyrics, prose and plays, and should be counted among the most important representatives of the young author's generation. In his work we sense the nature of a restless wanderer, with a contempt for life, seeking quiet and solitude, a subtle and over-sensitive artist. Although he died at an early age he left numerous works.

His principal poetic works are: *Archipel* (Archipelago), *Soleares, Eerlijk Zeemansgraf* (An Honest Seaman's Grave); in prose: a volume of novelettes, *Schuim en Asch* (Froth and Ashes); two novels *Het Verboden Rijk* (The Forbidden Kingdom) and *Leven op Aarde* (Life on Earth).

MARSMAN, Hendrik; born 1899 at Zeist; died 1940.

Primarily a lyric poet, Marsman was the author of novels and short stories. His verse is modern in form and significance, courageously independent, often strikingly and aggressively intense. His work is for the most part more a reflection of feeling and sense of appreciation than it is purely literary. In his critical essays, Marsman is more impressionistic than contemplative, but always clear, sharp and hard-hitting. His novel, *De dood van Angele Degroux* (The Death of Angele Degroux), was widely appreciated as a literary experiment. In 1936 he received the Van der Hoogt Prize of the Netherlands Society for Literature for his collection of poems *Porta Nigra*. Marsman was drowned in the sinking of a ship carrying him to England.

DU PERRON, Charles Edgar; born in Meester Cornelis (Java), 1900; died in Bergen-Binnen (N.H.) 1940.

He came from an old distinguished Netherlands East Indies family and spent his entire youth in Java. As a young man he came to Europe where he lived mostly in Brussels and Paris. In 1938 he returned to Java and stayed there until 1940 when he came back to Holland. There he died a few days after the German invasion as a result of angina pectoris.

Du Perron is one of the most remarkable and important figures in modern Dutch literature. His life-work comprises a volume of collected poems *Parlando,* two volumes of short stories, three novels, of which *Het Land van Herkomst* (The Country of Origin) —his masterpiece—is of incredible richness and variety, four volumes of essays, a literary diary (*Blocnote Klein Formaat*—Little Notebook) and four studies on Multatuli.

BRAAK, Menno ter; born in Eibergen, 1902; died in The Hague, 1940.

Historian and philosopher, he received his doctor's degree on a thesis called *Kaiser Otto III, Ideal und Praxis im fruehen Mittelalter* (Emperor Otto III, Ideal and Practice in the Early Middle Ages). Ter Braak was the most militant and powerful spirit among young Dutch authors. He originally expressed himself in essay-form and concentrated mainly on general cultural problems. His fierce and bold critical attacks on the spiritual life of Catholics and ecclesiastical Protestants were expressed in his book, *Afscheid van Domineesland* (Farewell to the Pastor's Territory).

Ter Braak was one of the founders of the periodical *Forum* introducing new thoughts and new ideas into Dutch literary life. From 1936 until his untimely death—a few days after the German invasion of the Netherlands—he was the soul of Dutch anti-fascism.

His chief philosophical work is the trilogy: *Carnaval der Burgers* (The Citizens' Carnival), *Politicus Zonder Partij* (Politician Without Party), *Van Oude en Nieuwe Christenen* (Of Old and Modern Christians).

VESTDIJK, S.; born in Harlingen, 1898.

After studying medicine in Amsterdam and traveling as a ship's surgeon to the Netherlands East Indies, Vestdijk gave up practice. Only much later did he begin to write. He was co-editor of the literary monthly *Forum* and, after its discontinuance, of *Groot Nederland* (Great Netherlands). He wrote six volumes of poetry, three volumes of short stories, four volumes of essays and critical studies, and ten novels of which *Het Vijfde Zegel* (The Fifth Seal) (with El Greco as its principal figure) is the best—one of the masterpieces of Netherlands prose. His prose is distinguished by ironical scepticism and subtle psychological discernment.

TERBORGH, F. C.; this pen-name conceals a Dutch diplomat on active service.

VEEN, Adriaan van der; born in Venray, 1916.

This writer made his debut with a number of sketches dealing with the life of the unemployed, *Geld Speelt de Groote Rol* (It's Money That Counts), in which the people take stock of their poverty. He was immediately recognized by critics as the most powerful and vivid author of his generation. He has also published a volume of fantastic poems and prose called *Oefeningen* (Exercises).

VROMAN, Leo; born 1916.

He studied biology in Utrecht; he managed to escape from Holland during the German invasion in May 1940. He visited South Africa and from there went to Java where he became an assistant at an Indies university.

Vroman has illustrated comic strips in Dutch East Indies newspapers, has written poetry and short stories.

VASALIS, M.; (pen-name of M. Leenmans).

A woman physician in practice in Amsterdam. She has written two volumes of poetry and a few short stories of which that in this book is a reminiscence of her stay in South Africa in 1938.

VUIJK, Beb; born and brought up in the Dutch East Indies.

For many years she lived on the lonely island of Boeroe where her husband owned a kajapoeti-oil distillery. She has written two novels and a volume of short stories.

DEBROT, Cola; born in Willemstad (Curaçao, N.W.I.), 1906.

Debrot first studied law in Amsterdam and after receiving his degree went on to the study of medicine. He published two long short stories, *De Mapen* and *Mijn Zuster De Negerin* (My Sister the Negro). He is editor of *Criterium,* a literary magazine of the younger generation.

HELMAN, Albert (pen-name of Lou Lichtveld); born in Paramaribo (Surinam), 1903.

Helman spent his entire youth in Surinam. The scene of his first work is laid in the tropics and his novel *Zuid Zuid-West* (South South-West) expresses his love for the tropics with charm and purity. The scene of *De Stille Plantage* (The Quiet Plantation) of a later date is also laid in his native country.

MELLE, J. van; born in Goes, 1887.

In 1906 this author went as a teacher to Transvaal (South Africa). After a visit to Holland three years later, he returned to South Africa to settle permanently. The greater part of his prose is written in Afrikaans; some of his books are published in Netherlands. In most of his short stories he renders perfectly the atmosphere of the typical South African farmer's existence, the peculiar rhythm, so characteristic of life in the vast fields and plains.

Among his principal works published in Netherlands are: *Zuid Afrikaansche Schetsen* (South African Sketches) and *Bart Nel, de Opstandeling* (Bart Nel, the Rebel). Of his stories published in Afrikaans we mention: *Oom Daan en die Dood* (Uncle Daan and Death), and of his novels *Dawid Booijsen.*

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF AUTHORS

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF AUTHORS

	PAGE
Braak, Menno ter	443
Brulez, Raymond	376
Buysse, Cyriel	127
Coenen, Frans	102
Coster, Dirk	288
Couperus, Louis	92
Debrot, Cola	547
Deyssel, Lodewijk van	118
Du Perron, Charles Edgar	420
Eckeren, Gerard van	205
Elsschot, Willem	263
Erens, Frans	82
Gijsen, Marnix	319
Greshoff, J.	1
Haan, Jacob Israel de	299
Havelaar, Just	293
Helman, Albert	560
Heyermans, Herman	107
Leeuw, Aart van der	188
Looy, Jacobus van	51
Marsman, Hendrik	409
Melle, J. van	574
Moerkerken, P. H. van	199
Naeff, Top	215
Nijhoff, M.	303
Roelants, Maurice	357

PAGE

Roland Holst, A. 279
Roland Holst, R. N. 184
Schendel, Arthur van 173
Slauerhoff, J. J. 395
Streuvels, Stijn 147
Teirlinck, Herman 134
Terborgh, F. C. 478
Toussaint van Boelaere, F. V. 161
Van der Veen, Adriaan 489
Van de Woestijne, Karel 243
Vasalis, M. 520
Verwey, Albert 70
Vestdijk, S. 454
Vroman, Leo 508
Vuijk, Beb 537
Walschap, Gerard 338

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

134 329

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY